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Crackdown on Nigeria threatened

Ian Black in Edinburgh

COMMONWEALTH leaders wound up their summit in Edinburgh on Monday promising to monitor persistent human rights violations after angry criticism that they had failed to meet the challenge of abuses by Nigeria's military regime.

Endorsing a report on Nigeria's behaviour since it was suspended at the Auckland Commonwealth meeting in 1995, heads of government pledged to crack down in future if General Sani Abacha failed to meet his own timetable for restoring democracy.

In an attempt to give teeth to an enforcement policy, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group was given a permanent mandate to investigate members' behaviour — becoming what one official called "a permanent policeman".

Tony Blair, chairing the first Commonwealth meeting in Britain for 20 years and anxious to emphasise its achievements on economic and environmental issues, insisted progress had been made on Nigeria. "We have taken very, very tough action," he told a news conference. "Suspension continues, there will be further sanctions which follow, and if there isn't proper progress then there's no doubt at all that Nigeria's position will be in grave jeopardy in the Commonwealth."

Summit reports, page 9
Martin Woollacott, page 12



Nelson Mandela and Tony Blair stroll across St Andrews golf course during a break in the Commonwealth summit PHOTO: JOHNNY EGGITT

Share crash forces Wall St shutdown

Guardian Reporters

SHARE prices on Wall Street plummeted on Monday as the crash on global markets — provoked by financial turmoil in Asia — gathered momentum, provoking an unprecedented shutdown of all New York's equity markets.

In a day of volatile trading, the Dow Jones index in New York fell 554 points to 7161.15 until all trading was suspended on Wall Street more than an hour before the close of business.

The 7 per cent fall in New York was the biggest decline since Black Monday on October 19, 1987, and the largest points fall in its history. Under rules imposed on American markets since 1987, a cooling off period is required to calm nerves and allow traders to square their books.

The New York exchange's first stop for 30 minutes, in mid-afternoon, came when the market was 354 points down. Once trading resumed, panic selling restarted, triggering the second closure at 554.

As the crisis deepened, the US treasury secretary, Robert Rubin, met President Clinton's economic advisers. Mr Rubin told Mr Clinton he had been in touch with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to ensure there was adequate cash in the global financial system to deal with the problems in Asia, which provoked the market storm.

Mr Clinton appealed for calm. The collapse represents his most serious financial challenge since he was first elected in 1992 on a platform of stabilising the economy and reducing unemployment.

In the three trading days up to Monday in New York, the world's leading stock market, shares fell 11.6 per cent amid growing concern that the problems in Southeast Asia will rebound on the US economy.

Wall Street's crash had an immediate effect on Pacific rim markets. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index, which took a hammering last week before rallying on Friday, fell more than 16 per cent in early trading on Tuesday, prompting the chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, to hold his first crisis cabinet meeting since the former British colony reverted to Chinese rule in July. Hong Kong shares have lost 50 per cent in value over recent weeks.

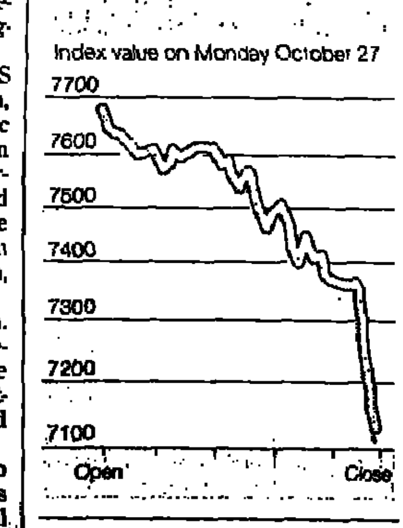
Tokyo stocks lost 4 per cent of their value by early Tuesday afternoon, and Taiwan's stock market was down by nearly 6 per cent at mid-session. Australia and New Zealand were also hit. The Australian share market closed down 7.2 per cent on Tuesday, and New Zealand shares fell 12.4 per cent, a week after hitting an all-time high.

In London, the FTSE 100 index plunged 450 points on Tuesday, knocking more than $130 billion off leading share values, but the market rallied later in the morning.

Monday's plunge in New York came after a day of gloom on equity markets around the world, which saw the value of people's savings falling hourly. Most traders left the stock exchange building in New York shell-shocked by the biggest one-day points fall in the Dow Jones on record and by the first shutdown of trading since the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963.

Wall Street's collapse was mirrored in the other markets of North and South America, with Brazilian stocks tumbling by 15 per cent, and the Mexican and Canadian markets shut down.

The White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, in an attempt to calm the market, said: "The president is confident the fundamentals of the American economy are strong . . . That's what matters most."



Asian turmoil, page 19

'Apartheid' judges snub truth commission

David Beresford in Johannesburg

SOUTH Africa's judges were judged themselves and found wanting by the truth commission this week when they failed to appear at hearings on the judiciary's role under apartheid.

The retired archbishop Desmond Tutu and his fellow commissioners were forced to hold a hurried meeting to decide whether to subject the judges to the ultimate humiliation of a subpoena after the wife of a death-row survivor demanded they be forced to account for themselves.

The hearings on the judiciary and the legal profession — described by the bishop as the most important after those dealing with human rights abuses — got under way in Johannesburg on Monday with Bishop Tutu expressing his "distress" that not one member of the judiciary had seen fit to appear.

But the cat was set among the legal pigeons when a lay witness, Paula McBride — who married Robert McBride on death row in the 1980s and fought an extraordinary battle to save him from the hangman — made a passionate plea that threatens to put the commission on a collision course with the bench.

In his opening address, Bishop Tutu said the judges' failure to appear indicated that "they have not yet changed a mind-set that properly belongs to the old dispensation". It appeared that he would let the issue lie with his rebuke until a young anti-apartheid campaigner took the witness stand to deliver one of the most forceful expositions of *J'accuse* yet heard by the commission.

Mrs McBride tore into the record of the judiciary under apartheid, accusing the country's judges of having made a bigger contribution than all the state's assassins to shoring up the system. "The judiciary enforced every aspect of apartheid, from the most petty and degrading to the most murderous and genocidal," she said.

"They sent people to jail for walking the streets of their own country without a pass; for using 'white' facilities; for loving someone of the wrong colour; for trying to live, or set up business outside of ghettos and bantustans. They sent people to jail or the gallows, knowing full well that they had not had a competent defence. They gladly accepted statements that had obviously been secured through torture. They enforced legislation that silenced the press.

"They punished opponents of their system — for theirs it was — with the harshest array of cruelties . . . yet, even up to now, they have managed to preserve and propagate the absurdity that they were somehow above it all — impartial."

Pointing out that leaders of the liberation movement had previously been subpoenaed, she said: "Why are the judges not being subpoenaed by the truth and reconciliation commission to account for what they have done in our history?"

The shaken commissioners met during the lunch adjournment to discuss her challenge. No decision was reached, but it is believed that sentiment was in favour of confronting the bench if it proved necessary.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Let's hear it for the good guys in America

AFTER months of reading the Guardian Weekly and witnessing a great deal of what I have concluded is kneejerk anti-Americanism, particularly from writers of letters to the editor, the question from Bryn Jones (Any answers?, October 19) has finally pushed me to respond.

Mr Jones asks: "Which is worse for the environment — the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest or the American use of resources?" No person in his or her right mind, Americans included (though many Guardian Weekly readers would apparently think that "right-minded Americans" is oxymoronic), would deny that Americans as a whole consume far too many of the world's finite resources. However, many of us dastardly Americans, though sinners all, are extremely concerned about such matters. I would like to invite any of you who live in another industrialised country to cast the first stone if you are without sin.

I would point out, for instance, that, according to various environmental statistics, Canadians are the world's largest per capita producers of garbage. That high garbage production must mean that Canadians are the world's largest consumers of goods per capita (unless, of course, their packaging is a lot bulkier than everybody else's). Canada also has considerably more lax environmental standards than the United States does, according to a recent Canadian government report. I cite these as examples of an area in which conventional wisdom about the US is not bolstered by facts, not from any animosity against Canadians.

Many critics of the US voice their criticism in a way that makes it sound as if this country is a huge, homogeneous monolith in which everyone is of one mind and approves of the way our government handles foreign (to say nothing of domestic) policy. That's far from the truth. While there is, of course, a kind of American entity that others see, and most Americans have a (sometimes overweening) pride of country, the US is so geographically vast, so ethnically, racially and even linguistically diverse, and so culturally different from region to region, that anyone moving from one region to another is in for culture shock.

It might be more accurate to see the US more in terms of a kind of European Union under one central government and 50 (state) sub-governments. Canada, too, even with a tenth of the population of the US, is so diverse as to be divisible by distinct regional concerns (beyond English and French Canada), which causes no end of political scuffling.

When someone looking on from Europe who has never been to North America draws conclusions about "the Americans", he or she must realise that the conclusion may only apply to a minority of us. Stereotypes are easy to adopt but aren't very helpful if you're interested in the truth. But I guess you Brits — morally smug, superior-acting, and emotionally and sexually repressed as you are — know that.
Marian Van Til
Lewiston, New York, USA

NOW wait, the United States may control much of the world's resources, but does it also determine the world's ethics? Ellen Goodman's righteous indignation at a double standard of ethics for US research in Africa is well taken (Double standards on ethics exports, October 5). But isn't the bigger problem the fact that, outside the research project, "the likelihood that [African] women will get AZT is virtually nil"? Ms Goodman admits this "double medical standard", but goes on to decry the "double ethical standard" — as if the double medical standard were not an ethical issue at all. It's a classical case of choking on a gnat and swallowing a camel.
Raymond Downing,
Webuye, Kenya

Still fighting colonial battles

IT IS true that the least defensible feature of British involvement in Rhodesia from the 1830s onwards was the land issue (Zimbabwe to seize white farmland, October 19). But however deplorable this was, surely it is not an excuse, 100 years later, for President Robert Mugabe to seize land from Zimbabwe citizens on the basis of their colour?

For this he expects the British government to compensate the taking of productive farms from many, some of whom are not even of British extraction. If we are to take this logic to its ludicrous conclusion, are we now to expect the removal of the Matebele farmers from their lands, acquired in the 1830s, and compensation paid for by the KwaZulu government? I hope the British government will not be blackmailed into using taxpayers' money as compensation because a man for whom many Zimbabweans have long lost all respect will do anything — including ruining his country's economy and reputation — for his own short-term survival.
Louis van Aardt,
Harare, Zimbabwe

IS THE Guardian Weekly, by publishing Andrew Higgins's article from Hong Kong (HK sees history through Chinese eyes, October 19), suggesting that the Opium wars — perhaps one of the most disgraceful episodes of 19th century British colonial history — did not take place, or that if they did, that the historical cover-up should continue?
Gordon Watson,
Sydney, Australia

More than a hill of beans

GEORGE MONBIOT gives a chilling illustration of the lack of democratic control over the decisions shaping our future (Watch these beans, September 28). Government representatives negotiate international agreements in a process so Byzantine that even journalists, diplomats and lobbyists working full-time on them do not fully understand the implications. In these proceedings, sophisticated lobbyists for multinationals with vast sums at stake can run rings around negotiators for most countries, which devote less manpower and resources to the process.

Nor do the lobbyists rely solely on reasoned argument to win their points, for they have both the stick of withdrawal of investments and the carrot of employment for politicians and officials after they, as the Japanese delicately put it, "descend from heaven" into the non-official world.

Results, if they enter national politics at all, are usually simplified into ritual sloganeering — either you are for progress, globalisation and "free" trade, or you are a protectionist dinosaur, going through Canute-like motions to hold back the incoming tide. There is no meaningful public scrutiny outside ritualistic legislative hearings once a deal is done, or in the specialised trade press.

This makes the so-called European Union "democracy deficit" seem negligible. After all, in the EU there is a parliament and it only stays toothless at the choice of elected heads of government. In contrast, years after signing on to the World Trade Organisation or the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta), one learns that one's government may not be able to respond to reasonable public concerns over the labelling of biologically altered foods, or the levelling of the cultural playing field against the United States media behemoths, due to clauses skilfully inserted in favour of the élite that controls large international conglomerates.

What we need is fair trade, not falsely labelled free trade skewed towards the interests of the powerful and affluent minorities of all countries. If ever there was an argument for informed public debate over major changes to the international trading regimes, and indeed for an international democratic assembly to vet them for such time-bombs, this is it. Elective decision-making at the national level, even where it exists, is incapable of effectively representing the interests of ordinary people on this issue. That elected officials are increasingly giving up trying is shown by the neo-liberal vogue sweeping all before it.
Nigel Tappin,
Dwight, Ontario, Canada

Hands across the Irish sea

FINTAN O'TOOLE (Be brave Ireland, think the unthinkable, October 19) argues convincingly the case that Dublin should rejoin the Commonwealth and that leaving it in 1948 sharpened divisions between North and South. Not only should it do that, but, together with the British state, it should disestablish the Church. Not only would this be consistent with the multicultural society that we now live in, but it would remove another seed of hostility and suspicion from the Irish debate. With the taint of Popery gone, with an identity of political purpose joining our two countries, what steam would there be left in Unionism? The closer the British and Irish states, the nearer a solution in Northern Ireland.
Trevor A Rigg,
Edinburgh, Scotland

THOSE Protestants who are angry with Mr Blair for shaking hands with Sinn Fein may be justifiably upset when they remember the deaths of loved ones. Like the state of Israel, however, they must learn that the violence of their opponents has been caused by their own pride and intransigence.

One essential to civilised living is a just society. Yes, violence compromises this objective, but what effective alternative do the Protestants and the Israelis permit? This is the only valid goal in the Northern Ireland conflict, and all parties will have to shake hands to achieve it.
Rodney Knock,
Merewether, NSW, Australia

Briefly

JULIAN BORGER invites us to shed tears for poor little Israel as it "smarts at botched murder plot", which "forced it" to release Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (October 12). Meanwhile Bibi Netanyahu laments that "in every war we have mishaps" ("war"? I thought we had a "peace process") — and then goes on to boast, "We don't abandon our fighters". The Hizbullah defending their homeland against a foreign invader/occupier are "terrorists" while a shipload of Israelis invading Lebanon are habitually referred to by the press as "commandos". And now a bunch of killers with forged passports entering a neighbouring country that has a peace treaty with Israel to murder one of its citizens are "fighters"?
Miriam M Abileah,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

WAS the timing of the latest Trident missile order a kneejerk macho reaction, to show Commonwealth partners what a first-rate power we really are? The result in India, Pakistan and elsewhere will be to strengthen the view that if a third-rate power like Britain can have an expanding nuclear weapons programme then it's OK for them to have one too.
Mark Bigland-Pritchard,
Bristol, Avon

JOHN VIDAL'S report about the U'wa people of Colombia (October 12) is surely a prime example of the double standards in the application of human rights. These people want nothing from the consumer society and there is no money in extending to them the human right not to want anything.
M G Timmer,
Bali, Indonesia

JULIE BURCHILL has every right to consider Maybe I'm Amazed gorgeous and regard Imagine as one of the worst songs ever written (October 19). Her willingness to swallow Albert Goldman's allegations about John Lennon is also her problem. But it's a little bit unfair to allow someone with a demonstrated contempt for the Beatles to comment on matters related to the quartet without allotting some space for contrary (and in this case mainstream) opinions.
Mahir Ali,
Mortdale, NSW, Australia

THE article on El Niño (October 5) was interesting and informative, but surely the area in the diagram marked United States is British Columbia, Canada, with the northern tip of Washington state intruding at the bottom plus the Alaska Panhandle in the northwest?
E R Forster,
Ottawa, Canada

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US to end China nuclear sanctions

Martin Kettle in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton was expected to sweep aside America's nuclear sanctions against China this week and give President Jiang Zemin the political and economic prize he seeks from his controversial state visit to the United States.

The Chinese president arrived in Washington on Tuesday ready to phase out his country's supply of nuclear arms and know-how to Iran and to limit nuclear co-operation with Pakistan. In return, Mr Clinton was expected to lift a 12-year-old US ban on nuclear sales to China, a move worth $15 billion to the US nuclear industry.

The quid pro quo is the centrepiece of Washington's "co-operation, not conflict" policy with Beijing, and will cement a year of achievement for President Jiang that has also included the return of Hong Kong and a successful Communist Party congress in September. But the deal was likely to stir further protests against the Chinese leader when he runs a gauntlet of human rights campaigners and visits the White House.

At the meeting China is expected to promise to stop selling C-802 ship-to-ship cruise missiles to Iran, thus reducing the threat to US ships in the Persian Gulf and helping Mr Clinton to certify to Congress that Beijing is not providing nuclear help to other states, a legal precondition of the lifting of the nuclear sanctions.

In return, the US will be able to sell Beijing nuclear energy technology, which the Chinese need to speed their move from fossil fuel energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. US companies have recently mounted a massive lobbying campaign to allow them to compete against France and Canada for Chinese nuclear contracts. China requires $60 billion worth of nuclear reactors over the next 15 years, industry lobbyists claim.

Mr Jiang will also press Mr Clinton to end economic sanctions imposed after the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989, which prevent exporters from receiving US-backed loans for exports to China. But this is now seen as less likely in the intensely politicised atmosphere of the visit, which has drawn fire from right and left alike in the US.

However, China is expected to place a $2 billion order for 30 new Boeing aircraft during Mr Jiang's visit.

Little progress is expected over Beijing's wish to be admitted to the World Trade Organisation as a sign of the country's arrival on the global economic stage. Months of negotiation have produced no agreement for China to open up its economy and reduce its massive trade surplus with the US.

White House officials on Monday tried to play down expectations of any breakthrough on human rights — including moves on the imprisonment of dissidents and the continuing occupation of Tibet — which have fired the protest movement against the visit.

The Tibet issue, in particular, has become more prominent than ever, with Hollywood stars such as Richard Gere and Harrison Ford leading the campaign.

In Beijing, the wife of jailed pro-democracy activist Liu Nianchun said she had asked Mr Clinton to forward a letter to Mr Jiang urging her husband's release. Mr Liu was sentenced to three years in a labour camp in 1996 and is suffering from stomach and intestinal illnesses.

Washington Post, page 15

A Hindu nationalist chants slogans in New Delhi last week against plans to dismiss the rightwing Bharatiya Janata party government in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The central government backed down over the move PHOTOGRAPH: RAVEENDRAN

Protests greet Algeria vote

Rachid Khiari in Algiers

THOUSANDS of people marched through Algiers on Monday as pro-government and opposition parties protested against what they said was widespread fraud in last week's local and regional elections.

Leading parties urged that the results be revised or scrapped, a blow to the majority party of the military-backed president, Liamine Zeroual, in his effort to widen his political base and consolidate power with a series of elections.

Opposition parties marched through the capital in the latest of a series of protests that they vowed to continue until "the injustice is corrected". Witnesses' estimates of the protest crowd ranged from 2,000 to 7,000, though protest organisers said that they numbered 15,000.

Mr Zeroual's party, the National Democratic Rally (RND), took 50 per cent of the vote in the local and regional elections; it's ally, the National Liberation Front, 20 per cent; and the legal Islamic party, the Movement for a Peaceful Society (MSP), 10 per cent.

Mr Zeroual's party won control of more than half of the regional councils and will be able to govern about a dozen large cities on its own. The vote follows parliamentary and presidential elections over the past two years.

The National Liberation Front, the former ruling party now allied with the government, demanded a "correction of the announced results" and an investigation into what it called the "confiscation of ballots". It called on the government to prosecute the "commanders of this serious political plot". The FLN's secretary-general, Boualem Benhamouda, said that fraud had prevented his party winning the elections.

The head of the MSP, Mahfoudh Nahnah, accused "elements in the government" of using "dubious manoeuvres". And the opposition Rally for Culture and Democracy, flatly called on Mr Zeroual to scrap the election results.

The outlawed Islamic Salvation Front party denounced what it called "manipulation without precedent" in the elections. The party also claimed success in its call for a boycott, though the interior ministry put the turnout at 67 per cent.

The Front, which set off a bloody insurgency when it was robbed of a likely parliamentary election victory and banned in 1992, called the vote a "treacherous manoeuvre". At least 75,000 people have been killed since the insurgency began.

The Islamic Salvation Army, the Islamic Salvation Front's military wing, called a ceasefire on October 1, but at least one Front leader was quoted as saying the truce could end at any time. — *AP*

Le Monde, page 13

Kurdish factions return to open war

Chris Morris in Ankara

A TENUOUS ceasefire between two warring Kurdish factions in northern Iraq collapsed last week after the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said it had been forced to respond to attacks by the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and bombing raids by the Turkish air force.

The PUK said the air raids covered a wide area, while the KDP attacked on the ground. Thousands of people were displaced, making it difficult for humanitarian agencies to deliver relief.

The mountains of northern Iraq have been politically unstable since the Gulf war in 1991, when Saddam Hussein lost control of the region. Since then the two Kurdish factions have fought intermittently on the ground, while United States and British aircraft patrol the skies.

The latest clashes broke out last month. The PUK recaptured territory near the Iranian border and near a strategic road, before pressure from the US, Britain and Turkey forced a shaky ceasefire. The truce lasted for less than a week.

"The peace process has become a war process," said the PUK spokesman in Ankara, Shazad Saib. "There is no peace, so we will defend ourselves as best we can."

The presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq raises the stakes. They have set up an informal security zone on the border to prevent infiltration into Turkey by rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Turkish military and the KDP have been working together for several months against the PKK, which has been waging an insurgency in southeastern Turkey since 1984.

Turkey says its bombs are aimed at the PKK, not the PUK. But it appears to be entering the fighting between Iraqi Kurds, raising questions about its ability to mediate.

Turkey, the US and Britain are supposed to be co-sponsors of the Ankara peace process, intended to get the two Iraqi Kurdish factions to co-operate across the region. But there is no prospect that they will be able to persuade the PUK to withdraw voluntarily to its previous positions.

Ankara's role is proving awkward for Washington and London. Turkey says it has no plans to station soldiers in northern Iraq permanently. But it regularly mounts cross-border operations with thousands of troops.

The Turkish military seems to be using the KDP as a client militia to look after its interests, but it also has an extensive intelligence network of its own, and its troops have been in Iraq since May. "Turkey is playing fast and loose with international law in many respects," said one Western source.

The US and Britain sympathise with Turkey's attempts to subdue the PKK, but their main interest in northern Iraq is to keep up pressure on President Saddam. They regularly remind Kurdish factions that the alternative to co-operation could be falling under Baghdad's hegemony again.

The Week

ISRAEL freed 22 Palestinian prisoners in the latest instalment of the deal brokered with Jordan to secure the release of two Mossad agents and keep the peace process from floundering.
Bitter divisions, page 7

SIERRA LEONE'S military rulers and foreign ministers from its West African neighbours agreed a peace plan under which the Freetown junta will restore power to elected president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

ARGENTINA'S opposition Alliance, made up of the centrist Radical party and the centre-left Frepaso coalition, won 45.7 per cent of the vote in mid-term congressional elections to the Peronists' 36.2 per cent, marking the worst Peronist party election result in 10 years.

ZAMBIA'S President Frederick Chiluba said in a radio broadcast that an attempted military coup had been crushed and he was back in control hours after rivals claimed he had been ousted.

AUSTRALIA pledged to double its emergency food relief to Papua New Guinea as drought threatened 90,000 people in the remote highlands.

A VIDEO of eight German soldiers giving the outlawed Nazi salute and making anti-Semitic remarks prompted calls for closer monitoring and political training for new recruits.

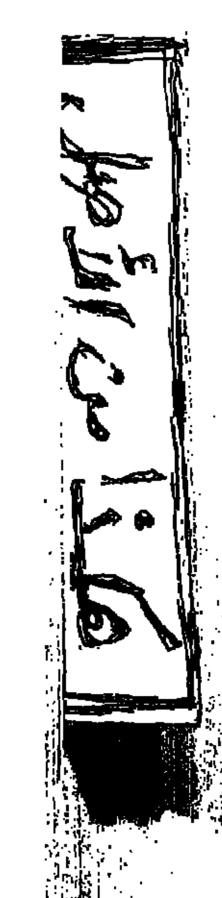
THE Indonesian government blamed small farmers for a new blanket of haze that has enveloped much of Indonesia, Singapore and parts of Malaysia.

NORTH America's biggest teachers' strike swept Canada's Ontario province as a walkout by 126,000 teachers barred 2.1 million pupils from their classes.

DENMARK was stunned when a 32-year-old nursing assistant in a home for the elderly was charged with killing 22 people by replacing their medicine with morphine — and was then released on bail by a judge in Copenhagen. If convicted, the woman, who denied the charges, would be the country's worst killer.

SWEDEN'S tough alcohol regulations, which give the government an effective monopoly on the availability of drink, have been upheld on health grounds by the European Court of Justice, which rejected a complaint from a would-be supplier.

THE former dissident writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn launched a $25,000 Russian literary prize named after himself. The first winner of the award will be announced in March.



Pentagon data on landmines 'flawed'

Andrew Higgins
in Panmunjom, South Korea

IN THE macabre arithmetic of obliteration, neither Diana, Princess of Wales, nor the Nobel peace prize add up to much. Or so says the Pentagon to explain its refusal to relinquish weapons that maim or murder 26,000 people a year — a defiance that gives grim authenticity to a chant of "Stand Alone", the macho motto of the 1st Battalion of the 506th Infantry dug in on the border with North Korea.

At Panmunjom, a cold war theme park billed as the "most dangerous place on earth" to day-trippers who arrive by coach from Seoul, and all along a frontier frozen since war ended in 1953, the United States does indeed stand on its own. It is alone among Western countries in clinging to anti-personnel mines.

If this is the frontline against 1.1 million North Korean troops, it is also the frontline in a campaign to fend off a widening attack on landmines. The so-called "Korean exception", in defence of which the US pulled out of talks on a global ban in Oslo in September, is under siege.

Diana's death gave emotional force to the Pentagon's critics. The award of the Nobel peace prize to anti-mine campaigners further weakened its defences. Perhaps more serious is an attack from inside the US military — a former commander in South Korea who condemns what he calls a "gameplan for disaster".

Lieutenant-General James Hollingsworth says: "To be blunt, if we are relying on these weapons to defend the Korean peninsula we are in big trouble." He has endorsed a study by a Washington think-tank accusing the Pentagon of feeding faulty data into its war game computer to prove the necessity of a weapon that 80 countries have agreed to ban in December.

The war game, known as Janus, and run by the US army, predicts "tens of thousands" of additional allied casualties without landmines, particularly a new generation of hi-tech mines.

At Panmunjom, soldiers fan out each day to preach the "humanitarian" mission of the more than 1 million mines scattered around Korea: they save lives by deterring, or at least slowing, an attack. The 35 people, including children, officially acknowledged as having been killed by the devices in South Korea since 1992, are a small price to pay for avoiding war or retarding its spread.

The Pentagon is not merely fighting to defend the primitive devices buried near the tank traps and barbed wire fences bisecting Korea. Far more important to the US is the almost cosy-sounding category of weapons known as "the family of scatterable mines", or Facsam.

"What they really want to do is keep a new type of mine that no one else uses," says Caleb Rossiter, director of Demilitarisation for Democracy, a Washington research group that has just completed a study of US mine strategy in South Korea. "They spent a lot of money developing it and are very pleased with the result. It wreaks all kind of havoc."

"You don't want to make it easy for the bad guy," says Jim Coles, the US military spokesman in Seoul. "Mines are not a pretty weapon but when they save lives as they do here they are valuable. It is a tough, ugly business and people who don't live here can't understand."

Indeed, most people living in Korea voice few objections. Debate on any security issue is rare.

The ghoulish mathematics that underpin the Pentagon's argument, however, seem flawed. A report by Demilitarisation for Democracy details how wonky assumptions compromise Janus. Among these is an estimate that North Korea could advance against allied forces at an unlikely speed of 12 miles an hour. Most of Korea is mountainous. "Even a minor change in a single assumption can change the entire conclusion of the game," says the study.

Pentagon programmers also underestimate North Korea's ability to breach anti-personnel mines, ignoring Pyongyang's likely use of human wave tactics and fuel-air explosions to trigger mines. Lieut-Gen Hollingsworth said: "North Korea's disciplined troops will be just as willing to move through minefields, despite taking casualties, as they and Chinese troops frequently did during the Korean war."

Until earlier this year, the US insisted that removing landmines would allow North Korea to capture Seoul before being defeated. It now says Seoul would most probably not fall, but has kept its original estimate for casualties.

Panmunjom has long served as a showcase for the US military. To accommodate visitors, a huge observation deck is under construction to peer north into the last citadel of Stalinism. Propaganda has rarely come so easy. But that was before Diana and the Nobel prize.



Antlers pile up on a snow-covered field in northern Siberia as Russians load reindeer carcasses on to a helicopter at the end of the hunting season PHOTOGRAPH: VLADIMIR VEL[illegible]

Pol Pot says his conscience is clear

Nick Cumming-Bruce
in Bangkok

BROKEN by age and sickness, and stripped of power by his former followers, Cambodia's Pol Pot is shuffling towards his grave still insisting on the justness of his cause, and that his conscience is clear.

In the first interview the leader of one of the century's most brutal tyrannies has given in more than 18 years, Pol Pot concedes, as he has before, that "our movement made mistakes". But he disputes Western estimates that almost 2 million people died in the less-than-four years his Khmer Rouge ran Cambodia.

"I came to carry out the struggle, not to kill people," he tells Nate Thayer of the Hong Kong-based Far Eastern Economic Review in an interview published last week. "Even now you can look at me: am I a savage person? My conscience is clear."

But almost in the same breath, Pol Pot defends — and thus confirms — ordering the execution of thousands of Cambodians while in power, invoking the old Khmer Rouge mantra of the Vietnamese peril still used to appeal for popular support.

"We had no other choice. Naturally we had to defend ourselves," he offers by way of explanation for a regime that emptied cities, systematically liquidated real or imagined enemies and, as paranoia advanced, eventually turned on its own, torturing and executing many senior cadres.

"The Vietnamese . . . wanted to assassinate me because they knew without me they could easily swallow up Cambodia," he says.

The veteran Khmer Rouge boss, aged 69, described by Mr Thayer as obviously gravely ill and perhaps near death, was speaking in a jungle hut in northern Cambodia, where he now appears to be held under house arrest with his second wife and daughter, aged 12.

The interview, in which he also denies the existence of the Khmer Rouge's most infamous and meticulously documented interrogation centre, at Tuol Sleng, shows Pol Pot rigidly adhering to the line he took two decades ago.

"To say that millions died is too much," he says of independent estimates of deaths from execution and starvation during the Khmer Rouge attempt to convert Cambodia to a Maoist Utopia, echoing interviews he gave in 1979. "Only several thousand [Cambodians] might have died," he said at that time. Now he tells Mr Thayer that Vietnamese agents were responsible.

But he also admits to ordering the execution on June 10 of one of his oldest and closest associates the former Khmer Rouge security chief Son Sen and his once powerful wife, but denies ordering the slaughter of 14 members of his family, including children and grandchildren said to have been killed by a lorry driving over their heads.

"You know for the other people, the babies, the young ones, I did not order them to be killed," Pol Pot tells Mr Thayer. "For Son Sen and his family, yes."

Pol Pot ordered the killings in an attempt to halt negotiations between Khmer Rouge leaders and the Phnom Penh government's then royalist co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Instead he triggered a revolt that toppled him, led by the grizzled veteran Ta Mok, also said to have been on the execution list.

Ta Mok breaks with the old Khmer Rouge line and implicates Pol Pot in the slaughter. "It is clear that Pol Pot has committed crimes against humanity," he tells Mr Thayer. "I don't agree with the American figure that millions died. But hundreds of thousands, yes."



Pol Pot: 'Am I a savage person?'

Swedes sacked Jews to please Nazis

Alex Duval Smith

SWEDISH companies such as Ericsson, AGA and Hasselblad cameras, and most of the neutral country's paper and wood industry, boosted their trade with Nazi Germany by organising and backing voluntary purges of Jewish staff and board members.

The revelation, in Dagens Nyheter newspaper last week, comes amid growing claims that Sweden not only secretly collaborated to protect its neutrality but actively sought to profit from close links with the Nazi regime.

Documents obtained by the Swedish daily newspaper also reveal at least one instance of a company, SCA, securing huge orders from Germany by withholding exports to Britain and the United States of cellulose, a key constituent of paper.

But the most shocking evidence, backed by letters and transcripts obtained from the Swedish secret police, shows that leading companies sacked Jewish board members and staff to satisfy the German companies with which they wished to trade.

This collaboration, which began after Germany occupied Denmark and Norway from April 1940, was expressed in letters between Swedish and German companies.

"We feel it is our duty to inform you that we very probably have purer Germanic blood in our veins than you, especially since you come from the Rhineland," wrote the managing director of one small company in western Sweden to a German client on May 17, 1941.

A Stockholm furrier wrote on February 21, 1941: "Our firm is pure Aryan and there is, thank God, not a single drop of Jewish blood in it. Heil Hitler."

Another letter, also from secret police files, confirms that Jewish people in Sweden were aware of a campaign against them. "Firms that have connections with Germany refuse to hire us," wrote a Jewish man in Stockholm to a friend in Italy.

The newspaper reveals that the systematic sackings had the blessing of the government. It adds that Jacob Wallenberg, the diplomat whose role was to negotiate trade with Germany, would have had full knowledge of Swedish companies' complicity in drawing up blacklists of "non-Aryan or anti-German" companies.

Wallenberg's cousin, Raoul, became a war hero after saving hundreds of Jews in occupied Hungary. He disappeared at the end of the war and is believed to have died in a Soviet labour camp.

Letters opened by secret police censors during the second world war, and archived, show that Swedish companies were far from compelled to "Aryanise" their companies but did so for profit motives.

● A newly unsealed document says Swedish jewellers bought diamonds stolen by the Nazis and smuggled in by an aristocrat, according to reports. The matter is being examined by the commission formed this year to investigate Sweden's acquisition of Nazi gold.

France's far right shuts up the resistance

Jon Henley in Vitrolles

MEMORIES of Vichy continue to haunt France but here in this depressed town near Marseille a battle has been joined against a real and present threat — that more towns may fall, by a "domino effect", to the far-right National Front.

The two sides face each other across a bleak square. At one end is the town hall, a glass and concrete bunker; at the other, sandwiched between a perfume shop and a medical lab, is a dark cellar bar and live music venue called the Submarine.

Since February, the town hall has been occupied — although she is not there very often — by a new mayor, Catherine Mégret. Her husband, Bruno, does most of her speaking for her, and he is the deputy leader of Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-immigrant, French-culture-first National Front.

The Submarine is the focus of the resistance to what the Mégrets are trying to do. It is lively, multicultural and multiracial, and the only interesting evening hangout for local youth. Now it is closed.

"In all the time we've been open we haven't had a single complaint from the police, from residents, from shopkeepers, no one," said Thierry Curbelié, aged 29, who did the Submarine's paperwork.

Last year, the council-owned venue staged 43 concerts featuring 92 bands, from rock to rap, ragga to jazz, folk to new wave. It hosted 400 hours of workshops and rehearsals and put together some 30 co-productions.

In May, the new National Front councillor in charge of culture, Brigitte Marandat, told the Submarine she would like to see it offer a "more French, more traditional" programme. The current offering "encouraged bad instincts in our youth", she said.

Then, in June, Mrs Mégret withdrew the Submarine's council grant of $32,000 a year. That was about a fifth of its funding; it is also supported by the culture ministry and the regional council, and makes up the other half of its $160,000 annual budget from ticket sales and bar takings.

Shocked, the Submarine's staff and 20 or so volunteers went on a nationwide tour to raise support and call attention to what was happening in Vitrolles. Since the new council was elected, they pointed out, the local cinema director had been sacked for refusing to withdraw films about homosexuality. Some 150 council staff, mainly youth and social workers, had been fired. Leftwing publications had been withdrawn from the libraries, which were told to subscribe to National Front magazines.

After the tour, a concert was held in Vitrolles stadium. Some big names turned up, including Noir Desir, one of France's leading bands, and outspokenly anti-racist. More than 4,000 people came and danced in support of the venue.

The Mégrets were not amused. Two days later, council workmen led by the town hall's chief of security showed up at the Submarine. They broke a window, forced the doors and walled up the entrance.

The Submarine, the town hall said in a statement, was a major nuisance to local residents. "Everyone knows that the atmosphere was not healthy, that drugs were circulating, and that many groups encouraged uncivic behaviour, violence, even delinquency. Such attitudes are not acceptable in municipal buildings."

There was a demonstration the next weekend; 3,500 people came, including Jack Lang, the former culture minister, whose idea it was to inject life into towns such as Vitrolles by encouraging small "café-concert" venues, run by young people for young people.

The current culture minister, Catherine Trautmann, called the town hall's actions "particularly violent and brutal", and said they marked "a new stage in the escalation of censorship against culture and music". The leftwing daily Libération compared Mr Mégret to Goebbels.

But, despite the support and winning a court judgment that ruled the council's break-in illegal, the Submarine has lost this battle. Last week the council formalised its decision to repossess the building and demanded that it be vacated within three weeks.

A suit for breach of contract and restriction of freedom of expression will take up to three years. So the Submarine is moving out. Loic Taniou, aged 31, the artistic director, says they are looking for another venue, private this time. Central and regional government funding is assured.

"We are fighting, really, to make sure everyone sees what's going on here," he said. "Before, the National Front was just words. Now people are beginning to see that you can't talk to them. That there are consequences."

Vitrolles, a sad, straggling place of nearly 40,000 residents, is fertile ground for the National Front and is the fourth town it controls in southern France.

Mrs Mégret won 53 per cent of the vote. "It was a protest vote," said Francis Quintin, who runs the chemist's shop opposite the Submarine. "There was a lot wrong with the Socialist council: huge debts, rumours of fraud. People thought, let's try something different. The National Front promised more security, less crime, more jobs, less immigration. A lot of people bought it."

● Secret records proving that the French government and police lied about the extent of a massacre of Algerians in Paris in 1961 could weigh heavily in the Bordeaux trial of Maurice Papon, the former Vichy official, who was Paris police chief at the time.

Papon, aged 87, is accused of crimes against humanity for the deportation of 1,560 Jews when he was responsible for Jewish affairs in the Atlantic port between 1942 and 1944. During questioning about his subsequent career, he dismissed an allegation that 200 people were murdered by police during a street protest in Paris on October 17, 1961 as "a calumny".

Clinton embraces a paler shade of green



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

TO JUDGE by the instant condemnation abroad and by the lukewarm responses at home to Bill Clinton's speech on United States global warming policy last week, it won't be long before the White House is taking refuge in one of the oldest lines in the spinmeister's handbook — the one that says that if we've managed to offend everyone, then we must have got the balance of the policy about right.

Yet Clinton always aims to please rather than to offend, and this speech was a classic of the genre. Faced with a battle between his economists, who said that nothing should be done to jeopardise the domestic boom which is the delight of so many Americans and the president's greatest political asset, and his environmentalists, who said that the US was in danger of becoming an uncontrollable global warmer and hence an international pariah, Clinton announced not that one was right and the other was wrong, but that both were true, so all must have prizes. Where others found the irresistible force of climate change colliding with the immovable force of American consumer prosperity, Clinton characteristically revealed that there was no conflict, after all.

The answer, he told an audience at the National Geographic Society in Washington, was a strategy that was both "environmentally sound and economically strong". Climate change was real, he conceded, but it could be solved gradually and flexibly. Industry had to adapt, he warned, but it would be given $5 billion worth of tax incentives to do so, but the result would be greater prosperity and profit, not less. The US had to make binding international agreements, he admitted, but they need only be of a moderation which involved no concessions of principle. For the first time in human history, it sometimes seemed, sacrifice was to be not merely painless but actively pleasurable.

Clinton's Panglossian policy won few friends abroad, least of all among the delegates who had gathered in Bonn — capital city not just of Germany but now also, it seems, of environmental doom theory — to try to draft a treaty for the world to sign at Kyoto in six weeks' time. The Bonn delegates believe that the only argument worth having about global warming is whether the measures to combat it should be very severe or very, very severe. The European Union had already condemned a Japanese proposal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent from 1990 levels by 2010 as environmentally disastrous, and was pressing for a 15 per cent cut with Chinese backing. So there



weren't many cataclysmic adjectives left in the EU's thesaurus when Clinton blithely proposed merely to get back to 1990 levels by 2012 with a further 5 per cent by 2017.

But Clinton's announcement did not win much support back home either. The press mostly dubbed it "relatively modest" — faint praise for an address in which Clinton had claimed to confront "one of the most important challenges of the 21st century". The green lobby sided with its comrades across the Atlantic and accused the Clinton administration of dragging its feet. Industry feared that the cure might be worse than the disease, as did the trade unions, while Clinton's political opponents, scenting blood two weeks before a handful of important US elections, warned that it all meant higher fuel costs for ordinary Americans.

As though to underline the point, the Republican challenger for the governorship of Virginia suddenly surged to a seven-point poll lead on the day after the speech, after promising voters a huge cut in car taxes. The poll boost for James Gilmore III and the Clinton speech were not directly connected, but the coincidence serves to illustrate the scale of the cultural battle which faces any American politician who dares to tell the country that they must pay more for their fuel, or for their motor cars. Americans have always wanted to continue to enjoy the plenty to which they have become accustomed. That was why Jimmy Carter became so unpopular after telling them to save energy, and it is why so many people here recently voted that the best slogan to represent their nation was "America — More of Everything".

This is one reason why Clinton's international critics, though broadly right about the need for the US to take global warming much more seriously than it does, also need to give him a modest plaudit for at least attempting, however cautiously, to confront Americans with the consequences of what they are doing to the atmosphere. After all, Clinton did not shirk from giving his audience in Washington a set of figures which powerfully embody the peculiar importance of American policy; the US, he reminded us, has less than 5 per cent of the world's people, enjoys 22 per cent of the world's wealth, and emits more than 25 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases. Nor did he fail to chastise his own people for falling badly short of earlier emission reduction targets. And he did not do what so many Republicans would have done — and denounce the whole notion of binding targets as an international conspiracy to rob the American people of their prosperity.

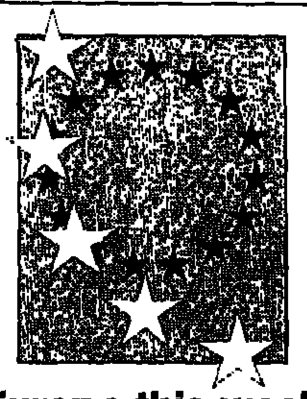
None of this leaves the administration looking very impressive. And if that is difficult for Clinton, it is even more of a problem for the man who waits in his shadow, Al Gore. The vice-president is a committed environmental campaigner, who once wrote a book called Earth In The Balance, in which he described global warming as the most serious problem the world has ever faced.

"I have become very impatient", wrote Gore, "with my own tendency to put a finger to the political winds and proceed cautiously. The integrity of the environment is not just another issue to be used in the political games for popularity, votes or attention. The time has long since come to take more political risks — and endure much more political criticism — by proposing tougher, more effective solutions and fighting hard for their enactment."

Those words would have gone down well in Bonn. But Clinton did not, and could not, utter them. His administration may be about to learn that to proceed cautiously is sometimes to take more of a risk than to act boldly.

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Santer's grandiose vision defies reality



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THE European Parliament's annual state of the union debate in Strasbourg was modelled deliberately on the report that the United States president delivers every January to Congress. By that standard, last week's European version was a dismal failure. US presidents play to full houses, and their addresses go out live on primetime television.

By contrast, when the European Commission president, Jacques Santer, wrapped up his morning speech, only 21 of the 626 members of the European Parliament were still in the chamber to hear him. As he later complained, some of those MEPs who had put questions to him did not wait for his answers.

Like so much else about the European project, from the federal ambition to the common currency, the state of the union address reflects the clumsy and creaky way Europeans adapt American ideas to far less expansive circumstances. The Europeans also began at the wrong end of the democratic trail. The Americans always put elections, if not what we now understand as democracy, at the start of the constitutional process.

The Europeans are only just getting around to this bit. Santer, like Jacques Delors before him and the other European commissioners, is not elected but appointed in a process of horse-trading by member states. The parliament is only just beginning to acquire teeth now that the Amsterdam treaty has given the elected body important new powers to review and even block the European Union's big strategic goals of enlargement and monetary union.

Where the European state of the union event can claim an advantage is that the president's address is followed immediately by a debate. This was worth attending because it explored the real dilemma at the heart of the European process. On the one hand, great and historic events are in train, both for a single European currency that will give dramatic force to integration, and for an enlargement of the union into eastern and central Europe. On the other hand, while the Euro-élites drive relentlessly onward with this grandiose vision, mass unemployment in France and Germany has demoralised the public.

Santer spoke for the élites. Crediting the latest faint signs of renewed growth in European economies to the euro effect, through the "sound macro-economic policies" of cutting budget deficits, Santer drew an optimistic portrait of a Europe that was ready and mostly eager for the single currency. Insisting that he was combining "realism with ambition", he spoke glowingly of a Europe that was starting to tackle unemployment, and preparing for its enlargement eastwards.

However, when leaders of the main political groups in the European Parliament spoke in their debate on Santer's report, they offered a much grimmer prospect, describing a continent battered by mass unemployment and deeply cynical of grandiose Euro-promises.

The parliament's president, José Maria Gil-Robles, challenged Santer's ebullient report by warning of "a sense of insecurity in the European public, to the point where such important advances as economic and monetary union are viewed with a suspicion which, even if unjustified, is none the less real".

Looming over this parliamentary debate, as least for the British, was the perennial question of whether they would once again miss the European bus. The single currency project is going ahead, and will start on time on January 1, 1999, with at least 10 and probably 11 states participating in the first wave. Britain will almost certainly not join then, but may do in the next Parliament if various economic criteria are met.

This restatement of Britain's old pragmatic tradition came after an extraordinary three weeks of leaks and counter-leaks from a Labour government which is unable to make up its mind, and which is starting to squander the feelings of relief and goodwill with which Britain's European partners greeted its victory in the May election.

"Monetary union is not a sticky proposal, as some in Britain have suggested. It is a strong one," Santer later told a press conference. "It is our view that a country that stays out [of the euro] cannot take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the single market. Over 60 per cent of Britain's trade is with Europe, and your exporters tell me that they now face problems because the pound is high. They would not face such problems inside the monetary union."

The current European Council president, Luxembourg's prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker, then told the Guardian that "a country that stays outside the euro will have a greater risk of currency instability, and that will be a disadvantage. But that is a choice for Britain to make."

Juncker's successor when his six-month term as Council president ends in January will be Tony Blair, creating the odd situation where Britain will preside over the key decisions on a currency it is not committed to join, or at least not yet.

The arguments for and against joining the euro are complex. There is no doubt that Britain would qualify, on the current healthy state of its economy. But Britain's interest rates and the pound are uncomfortably high, because it is at the peak of the economic cycle while the French and Germans are just clambering out of the trough.

MORE GENERALLY, once inside the European monetary union Britain's freedom of manoeuvre over national economic policy would be much diminished, though given the usually wretched performance of the Treasury's economic policy-makers over the recent decades, that might come as a relief.

The real question is whether Britain could continue to offer a more open, entrepreneurial economy with lower taxes than continental Europe once their partners start imposing interest and tax rates to finance a social model that even a Labour government in Britain does not want fully to adopt. The likelihood is that Britain will, as usual, belatedly and grumpily bumble its way aboard a European bus on which all the best seats are taken, and whose route has already been charted by the others.

Netanyahu's aside infuriates Israelis

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

RABBI David Ariel Yoel arrived at his synagogue early one morning during last month's religious holidays to find it desecrated. Broken windows, swastikas, graffiti threatening, "Cursed be you evil ones — die!"

It is the latest in a series of attacks on Jerusalem's Har-El synagogue, which include threatening phone calls, hate mail, vandalism, acid poured on its lawn and human excrement smeared on the entrance. Elsewhere in the city, a kindergarten has fallen victim to arsonists and Jews are attacked at the Western Wall.

Palestinian violence?

No. The victims are Reform and Conservative Jews, the suspects ultra-Orthodox adherents. Among the charges levelled at the liberal stream of Judaism is that the Reform faith is a "derisive mockery" and its rabbis "terrorists".

In Tel Aviv and the suburb of Ramat Aviv a controlling interest in a new shopping and cinema complex has been acquired by an Orthodox diamond merchant, Lev Leviev, who wants it closed on the Sabbath. Shopkeepers who signed contracts allowing them to open on Saturdays — and the majority secular residents — protested that it violates the character of their neighbourhood. The courts ruled in Leviev's favour.

Last week politics and religion collided. It began with a rally by Orthodox Jews in support of the "Conversion Bill", which would enshrine in law their right to decide who is a Jew in Israel. Rabbi David Yossef told supporters: "The Reform and the Conservative movements have created a different religion that has nothing in common with Judaism. When they return to Judaism they will leave the bizarre religion they have fashioned."

Enter Binyamin Netanyahu, prime minister, leader of the right-wing Likud party and self-professed anti-terrorism expert.

At a recent religious ceremony he crouched next to the eldest of Israel's sages and spiritual leader of the Sephardis, Rabbi Kadouri, and whispered: "The left wing has forgotten what it means to be Jews. They think we will put our security in the hands of the Arabs — that Arabs will take care of us. We'll give them part of Israel and they'll take care of us.

"Whoever heard of such a thing! It's as if the [biblical] spies [12 of whom were sent into the Promised Land to report back to the Jews in the desert] came and said, 'Not only are they [the Palestinians] mighty and we're afraid of them, but they're mighty and we'll let them protect us!'"

The remarks were picked up by a microphone and broadcast on national news, creating a furore. Netanyahu refused to apologise, but last weekend, at the prompting of Rabbi Kadouri — who had appeared to nod in agreement with the prime minister — put out what was intended to be a conciliatory statement, urging Jewish unity.

Yaron Ezrahi, a political scientist at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, believes the failure of the peace



Prime minister Netanyahu and Rabbi Kadouri celebrate their birthdays: their whispered conversation inflamed Jewish divisions

process and difficulties over the Conversion Bill have created "the greatest crisis within the Jewish people since 1948", Mr Ezrahi is not surprised by Mr Netanyahu's comments. "It is consistent with his strategy of politicising the category of Jewishness," he says.

The process, says Mr Ezrahi, has accelerated since Yitzhak Rabin's assassination two years ago, but is contiguous with Mr Netanyahu's tacit support and, some say, promotion, of the anti-Rabin campaign before his murder. "He was elected on a platform of 'Rabin divides the nation — I will unite it'," says Mr Ezrahi. "Now he has failed to unite his country around an alternative to Oslo . . . But the underlying text is that the peace process is un-Jewish."

Mr Ezrahi, who has visited the United States regularly since the early 1960s, says he cannot remember "anything remotely like the anger there" among its powerful and overwhelmingly non-Orthodox Jewish community about the Conversion crisis that is feeding Washington's disenchantment over Mr Netanyahu's handling of the peace process.

There is an even bleaker forecast: that the message of last year's elections is that Israel is now a federation of tribes whose common denominator is dwindling by the day.

This thesis has become the backdrop for the new Labour leader Ehud Barak's plans to win the next election. Barak's courting of religious parties is a new departure for the "establishment" Ashkenazi and secular Labour party, one with which many of its leading lights are uncomfortable. But, for the first time in Israel's history, those parties have emerged as key political players.

Serb refugees die of despair in the cold

Christopher Elliott in Belgrade

THE neighbours heard four shots. In a squalid and freezing room at the refugee centre near Belgrade they found Milka Dokmanovic, aged 66, and her husband Duro, aged 67, dead. They had been shot by their son Milan, aged 43, who had then turned the gun on himself.

They are part of an alarming rise in murders and suicides among the 566,000 Serbian refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The first wave of refugees arrived in 1992, at the beginning of the Bosnian war, but the most dramatic influx occurred during the ethnic cleansing of Krajina in Croatia in August 1995, when more than 200,000 people were expelled almost overnight.

According to the Red Cross, the exiled Serbs are the largest refugee population in Europe, living among the 11 million people of the republics of Serbia and Montenegro. But the refugees' plight goes largely unrecognised in a world that finds little sympathy for anything Serbian.

As winter approaches many verge on starvation because basic rations have been cut by three-quarters by international humanitarian organisations short of supplies from donor countries.

Nova Pazova is a small town 50km northwest of Belgrade. A local population of 17,500 is swelled by more than 7,500 refugees, most of whom live with local families. Of the deaths last year refugees accounted for nearly half.

The cluster of dilapidated prefabricated barracks near the village of Stara Pazova that once housed factory workers is now home to 206 Krajinian Serbs, and where the Dokmanovic family lived and died. Their room was 2m by 3m. Naked electric wires hang from the ceiling, only some of which carry electricity. The ceilings leak when it rains and the one tap with running water was installed last week by UNHCR, the United Nations refugee organisation. There are no efficient sanitary facilities.

The family disagreement that led to their deaths reflects the biggest dilemma facing all the refugees. Milan wanted to settle in Serbia and had even identified a house near Novi Sad he hoped to buy with savings. But his parents wanted to return to their home village.

"The parents were homesick, they said they had no intention of staying here and they had a fight. He snapped," said Branka Pantelic, a Red Cross social worker.

Jelena Vlajkovic, a psychologist who has worked with traumatised refugees for four years, says that the number of suicides is rising sharply. The refugees are also "smoking and drinking enormous quantities so that, when you look at it, it is prolonged suicide", she said. The reason is simple: they can see no way out of their situation.

The Dayton accord, which ended the war nearly two years ago, guaranteed repatriation for all those wanting it. But fewer than 2,000 of the 566,000 Serbian refugees have returned. The harder-headed who remain recognise there is no going back; the elderly hang on to the dream.

Radmilla Milentijevic, a history professor from the United States who has returned to her native Serbia as minister of information, said the government had hoped to provide more grain to refugees this year but this had not been possible because of an export contract with Russia.

She acknowledged with a candour rare among Serbian ministers that they have signally failed to dispel the images of atrocity committed by Serb soldiers during the war, and that the refugees suffer a sort of guilt by association.

"The US holds the key. We are suffering from being unable to go to the world's financial institutions because of the outer wall of sanctions," she said. "The refugees are suffering from the West's perceptions of what the Serbs did. But the Serb government is well fed, they're not suffering — just innocent women and children."

● A senior official of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's ruling leftwing alliance was shot dead last week in an attack apparently linked to political and gangland violence in Belgrade.

The shooting of Zoran Todorovic, aged 38 and secretary of the powerful neo-communist United Yugoslav Left party, followed the unsolved murder this year of Mr Milosevic's police chief, General Radovan Stojicic.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Tories recast themselves in the role of local heroes

IF THE TORIES are to recover from their humiliating general election defeat, the best place to begin the fight-back will be at the local government elections in May next year. To that end, the party's environment spokesman, Sir Norman Fowler, is to chair a policy review designed to present Conservatives as the party of "localness".

Tory strategists acknowledge that the devastating loss of council seats last year had a direct impact on the party's ability to fight the general election campaign. Only 23 councils are now Conservative-controlled; Liberal Democrats control 26, and Labour 205.

Tory unpopularity at the local level owes much to Margaret Thatcher who, during the 1980s, led a sustained assault on local authorities, which she regarded as spendthrift and politically irresponsible. She capped their spending, ordered council houses to be sold, limited the power of education authorities, and put town halls almost entirely at the mercy of the Treasury.

The Conservative vice-chairman, Archie Norman, conceded last week that the party had spent 18 years diminishing the importance of local government and of those who stood for election to it. This, he said apologetically, was an "unintended by-product" of Thatcherite policies.

The policy review is expected to jettison many of those policies, particularly the punitive restrictions on council spending. Tory councillors, who have latterly had little influence outside their own wards, will also demand an enhanced status within the party hierarchy.

The elections next May will be a critical test of William Hague's abilities as party leader. He acknowledges that and sees local government as a target where the Tories can score hits.

WELFARE-TO-WORK, one of New Labour's big ideas, came under attack when the Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, boasted that more than 400 lone parents had found jobs as a result of pilot schemes designed to help those with children aged five or older.

In the pilot areas, lone parents who live on state benefits are invited to be interviewed by a "personal adviser" who will calculate how much better off they could be in work, once account is taken of family credit benefit which tops up low pay and can help with childcare costs.

Miss Harman said that 433 lone parents had found work during the first three months of the scheme. This was more than one in five of the 2,026 interviewed, and was a "positive start" to the £21 million programme. It was, however, only one in 20 of the 8,651 invited to interview.

The shadow social services secretary, Iain Duncan-Smith, whose team visited six pilot areas, said many of the job-finders would have got work anyway, given the generally improving employment prospects. He claimed that those who had not been interviewed were "simply not co-operating," though Ms Harman insisted there had not yet been time to carry out the interviews.

Social security officials admitted that it was impossible to tell if the job-finders would have succeeded regardless, but said research was under way to compare trends in the pilot areas with those elsewhere.

THE PRINCE of Wales called for an integration of alternative and complementary medicine with orthodox treatments, saying that the therapies could help patients and save money for the cash-strapped National Health Service.

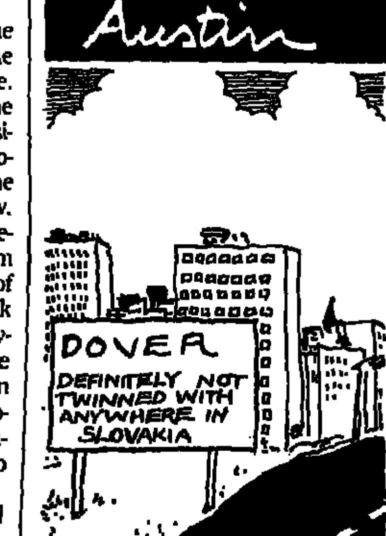
His call was backed by a report from the King's Fund, a health think-tank, which carried out a study at the prince's instigation. This concluded that better regulations should be introduced to protect the public from quacks, but that alternative medicine should be more widely used in the NHS and be taught at medical schools.

SACKED Liverpool dockers prepared to dig in for what is likely to be the most bitter phase of their two-year dispute after rejecting, by more than two to one, a settlement package that their former employers insisted was a final offer.

The 329 dockers were locked out by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in September 1995, when they refused to cross a picket line. The company's offer was of jobs for 40 of the men and a £28,000 pay-off for each of the others, but they said they would settle for nothing less than reinstatement for all.

THERE WAS much alarm, largely whipped up by the rightwing tabloid press, about the increasing arrival in Dover of Czech and Slovak Gypsies applying for asylum from alleged persecution in their own countries. One newspaper claimed that 3,000 Gypsies were heading for Britain "to milk the benefits system".

Romanies from eastern Europe have been arriving at Dover for some time, at the rate of two or three families a week, but last week there were as many as 26 in one day. The number involved over the past two years is thought to be 800 at most, though Migrant Help Line, which houses refugees on entry, put the number at 400, and said many of them were promptly deported. But because they all arrived at a fairly small coastal town, they were highly visible, placing a strain on Kent social services and provoking ill-feeling in the local community.





Casting off the traditional ties, or at least tie . . . In an effort to 'bond' with his parliamentary party, the Conservative leader, William Hague, invited Tory MPs to Easthourne for a two-day get-together. A relaxed clothing policy was offered as proof of the Conservatives' commitment to rejuvenation. The result revealed a new split, as one MP remarked, 'between the suits and the sweaters' PHOTO: STEFAN ROUSSEAU

Labour MEPs suspended for refusing to sign 'gag'

David Hencke, and Martin Walker in Strasbourg

FOUR rebel Euro MPs were suspended from the European Parliamentary Labour party last week after they refused to apologise for flouting the party's new code which gags them from criticising government policies in public.

The decision was announced by Wayne David, the Labour MEP leader, after two of the rebels sent him a defiant note saying that they found it "astonishing and distressing that you should seek to impose a gagging order on us".

The four are Ken Coates, MEP for Nottingham North and Chesterfield; Hugh Kerr (Essex West and Hertfordshire East); Alec Falconer (Mid-Scotland and Fife); and Michael Hindley, Lancashire South.

Mr David said: "This is unprecedented. They are suspended from the European Parliamentary Labour party, which means they cannot attend meetings and discussions of the Labour group, although they are expected to follow the Labour whip.

"This is not something that we like doing, but we think it very important that Labour MEPs, like everyone else in the Labour party, accepts collective decisions and procedures which have been agreed by the national executive committee."

The four had been told to sign a pledge to abide by a new code of conduct, under which MEPs would be prevented from criticising the Government's plan to introduce proportional representation for the 1999 European elections. The four MEPs regard this plan as being part of a move by the Labour leadership to weed out old Labour militants from the MEPs and to bring MEPs much more tightly into the Blairite line. The four refused to sign.

The European Parliament president, José-Maria Gil-Robles, ordered an inquiry into whether Labour's new code of conduct breaches the European Parliament's own rules. These state that MEPs "shall not be bound by any instructions and shall not receive a binding mandate".

U-turn over animal tests

Paul Brown

TONY BLAIR'S pre-election promises to outlaw animal testing for cosmetics have been abandoned, the Home Office confirmed last week.

Animal tests for medical and cosmetics purposes, involving 2.6 million animals last year, would continue for the "forseeable future," the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said.

He added that while the Government "looks forward to the time when animals will not be used in scientific procedures, there appears to be no immediate prospect that that will be possible".

Although a Labour campaign document signed by Mr Blair before the general election said the party was "totally committed" to stopping cosmetics testing on animals, Mr Straw has accepted a report from a government quango, the Animal Procedures Committee, which has reviewed legislation.

It said it did not consider the possibility of ending cosmetics testing, as the law makes no distinction between that and medical testing.

Mr Straw's announcement enraged the animal rights lobby. Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, said in a letter to Mr Blair: "I am deeply disturbed that the Government is not banning animal testing for cosmetics and am asking for your personal intervention to ensure that the promise you made is kept."

She said it was not true that animal testing could not be ended. The Body Shop and other cosmetics companies produced a full range of products without "abusing animals". She added that a 4 million-signature petition demanding a ban was handed to the European Union last year, and action was promised.

In his statement Mr Straw said the rules for using animals in experiments would be tightened up.

At present, companies are only asked to state they have considered alternative methods to animal testing before being granted a licence to do so. In future, they will be asked to explain what alternatives they have considered before getting permission.

Surfing keeps its sex appeal

Alex Bellos

FOR technological romantics who like to believe the Internet is about stretching the boundaries of human discovery, comes a blunt reminder: it is not. It is about sex.

Six of the top 10 search words — words typed into computers by people looking for specific information — are about matters lewd and lascivious, according to a survey in the Web magazine.

The scale of sexual interest may be surprising even to the kinkiest of net surfers.

The word "sex" was the most popular over the month-long period, with more than 1½ million requests. Second was "chat", with almost 75 per cent less interest.

The complete top 10 was: 1, Sex; 2, Chat; 3, XXX; 4, Playboy; 5, Netscape Software; 6, Nude; 7, Porno; 8, Games; 9, Weather; 10, Penthouse.

Dozens of other sex-based words clog up the top 200, although there is evidence of a growing consumer interest with the names of companies listed, said Mike Cowley, the Web's editor-in-chief.

"It is hardly a secret that [the Internet's] main appeal has been to the dirty anorak brigade," he said. "But what is interesting is that there is a marked swing away from sex . . . What we are now witnessing is the second Internet revolution — the impact of consumers.

"Sex will always be a part of the Internet but its importance will be significantly reduced over the next couple of years. Shopping will be far more popular than sex on the Internet by 2000."

Summit loses sight of economic focus

Ian Black

OVERSHADOWED by rows over Nigeria and Lockerbie, the Commonwealth's attempts to refocus on trade and investment — the main theme of the Edinburgh heads of government meeting — attracted little attention and even less praise.

Hopes were high that the summit's economic statement would be of similar weight to the Harare Declaration, issued in 1991 to map out a political agenda for the ex-colonial club after the end of its preoccupation with the struggle against apartheid.

But the publication of the statement did little to divert attention from rows over the trial of two Lockerbie bomb suspects *(see story, below)* and over the decision by the The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMag) not to impose new sanctions against Nigeria. CMag chose to ignore calls for Nigeria's expulsion and the imposition of an oil embargo. They concluded that the situation would be reassessed if General Sani Abacha failed to honour his promise to hold fully democratic elections next October.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was delighted with the six-page document, entitled Promoting Shared Prosperity. "It signals the end of ideology and reflects basic principles of economic and social justice," Downing Street said. "It would have been unthinkable only a short time ago."

But the declaration produced few surprises and many platitudes based on affirmation of free market principles in the global economy.

It was never going to be easy to bridge gaps between the Commonwealth's 54 members, which include both wealthy countries, such as Britain, and some of the world's poorest, such as Bangladesh. So Edinburgh stayed on safe ground, establishing four key principles:

- The world economy should be geared towards promoting universal growth and prosperity for all;
- There must be effective participation by all countries in economic decision-making;
- The removal of obstacles that prevent developing countries from playing a full part in shaping the global economy;
- International regimes affecting economic relations among nations should provide benefits for all.

Caribbean members insisted on a reference to their troubles over banana exports threatened by a new World Trade Organisation ruling, and won recognition of their "legitimate interests" and the need for help to diversify their economies.

Practical measures included a decision to establish a Commonwealth Trade and Investment Access Facility to help developing countries take advantage of globalisation.

One additional source of revenue was opened up with the creation of a new fund for development in South Asian member countries.

Commitments on investment included a pledge, demanded by the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, "to study how countries can be protected from the destabilising effects of market volatility, including those resulting from speculative activities".

The Worldwide Fund for Nature said the Commonwealth had not matched its rhetoric about the dangers of globalisation by failing to promise higher-quality investment, protection for the environment and labour rights.

Martin Woollacott, page 12

Britain put on defensive over Lockerbie trial

BRITAIN was forced on to the defensive over the Lockerbie bombing last week after relatives of the victims joined Nelson Mandela in demanding that two Libyan suspects be tried in a neutral location — not in Scotland or the United States, *writes Ian Black*.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, discussed the issue with the South African president during what should have been a day of quiet retreat in St Andrews for the Commonwealth leaders, while the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, mounted a media counter-offensive to insist that justice could be done only where the crime had taken place.

Mr Cook repeatedly argued that the Government was right to reject the neutral venue option. "If Libya is so convinced of the innocence of those two men, what is it that they can reasonably object to in a trial under Scottish procedures before 12 independent people on a jury?" he said. "We are quite clear that is a fair system of trial. It is, after all, the system we subject our own people to."

Two hundred and seventy people were killed when Pan Am flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie on December 21, 1988, and the finger was pointed at Iran — assumed to be behind the atrocity in retaliation for the US downing of an Iranian civilian airliner some months before.

Two Libyan intelligence officers were indicted in Scotland and the US three years later, but the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gadafy, has refused to surrender them.

Little has happened since United Nations sanctions were imposed on Libya in 1992, but Mr Mandela's high-profile intervention has galvanised the issue at a time when the Anglo-US position is being eroded internationally. Ignoring British and US protests, Mr Mandela came to Edinburgh via Libya, where he met Col Gadafy. He said that justice would not be seen to be done if the suspects were tried in Scotland, because Britain could not be "complainant, prosecutor and judge".

Most of the Lockerbie relatives in Britain support a third country trial, but the US relatives do not. Even if Britain were inclined to shift, it could not do so without agreement from the US, which holds much of the relevant evidence. Mr Cook urged the Arab League and the Organisation of African States to send a team to Scotland to explore the problems.

The Week

ONE YEAR after it launched its campaign for ethical shopping, Christian Aid says that seven of Britain's top 10 supermarkets have implemented policies that improve conditions for labourers in the developing world.

THE European Parliament voted to ban Britain's use of the term "chocolate" to define its national delicacy after objections from French and Belgian manufacturers that British confectioners use vegetable and other fats in their product rather than just cocoa butter.

Comment, page 12

THE Racial Equality Council for Leeds said that a situation "amounting to apartheid" had arisen in the city's taxi service after the dominant firm, Streamline, was censured for operating a "whites only" policy, and an industrial tribunal warned against the growth of a "counter-monopoly" by a rival cab company whose drivers are overwhelmingly of Asian origin.

MOTORISTS could be forced to retake their driving tests every 10 years under a European Parliament scheme being considered to help cut the number of road accidents. The proposal was condemned by the Automobile Association.

THE Government unveiled its first privatisation when it announced the sale of 60 per cent of the Commonwealth Development Corporation as part of a move to upgrade Britain's aid effort.

A MAN aged 30 was charged with the murder of a woman police officer in east London. PC Nina Mackay, aged 25, was stabbed when she entered a house to arrest a man who had failed to answer bail. The incident has led to renewed calls for the arming of officers.

TWO British soldiers jailed in 1992 for the murder in Northern Ireland of a nationalist will stay in jail for at least another year after the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, dismissed calls for their release.

THE Scottish butcher whose shop was linked to a major outbreak of *E.coli* food poisoning last year was cleared of endangering the lives of customers who ate meat he sold for a party they attended.

NEARLY four in 10 black children would prefer to attend an all-black school and one in five think they have suffered racism from a teacher, according to a poll by Amenta Marketing.

ALEXANDER McQueen and John Galliano were jointly named designer of the year at the Lloyds Bank British Fashion Awards.



The sister ship of the dredger involved in the Marchioness disaster in 1989, in which 51 people died, hit the Thames flood barrier and partially sank. The 3,000-tonne MV Sand Kite struck one of the barrier's concrete piers and came to rest on a flood gate. No one was hurt in Monday's incident, the worst in the 15-year history of the barrier designed to protect London from tidal floods PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Early euro entry ruled out

Michael White and Larry Elliott

THE Chancellor this week virtually ruled out British membership of a single currency for the next five years but failed to take the vexed issue of monetary union off the political agenda when his long-awaited statement ran into flak from both sides of the Commons.

In an attempt to win the Government some breathing space on the euro, Gordon Brown said Labour supported the project in principle and would take steps over the coming years to ensure that Britain was ready for entry.

However, he said the economy was so out of step with continental European economies that Britain could not make the first wave in 1999 and "barring fundamental or unforeseen change in economic circumstances" would not be ready before the end of the Parliament.

Provided the United Kingdom economy has converged by the early years of the next century, the Government would then recommend membership and put the question to the people in a referendum.

Given the hardline Eurosceptic stance of the Tory party under William Hague, Mr Brown's statement ensures that Europe will be a pivotal issue in the next election, predicted to be in the summer of 2001.

Labour strategists calculate that their more positive approach to the single currency will work to their advantage once the euro is up and running.

Mr Brown told MPs: "If a single currency works and is successful Britain should join it. We should therefore begin now to prepare ourselves so that, should we meet the economic tests, we can make a decision to join a successful single currency early in the next Parliament."

He refused to spell out a precise timetable, but warned MPs of the practical barriers which would prevent Labour joining in the first wave of membership in January 1999.

It prompted Lib Dem taunts that he had replaced John Major's "wait and see" policy with one of "wait and wait . . . and wait".

But there was no mistaking the decisive rhetorical shift away from years of Tory Euroscepticism when Mr Brown declared: "We are the first British government to declare for the principle of monetary union, the first to declare there is no over-riding constitutional bar to membership."

He insisted that for Labour the crucial test would be "clear and unambiguous economic benefit" to Britain.

The shadow chancellor, Peter Lilley, who declared the statement a deferred death sentence on the pound, concentrated on Treasury leaks, rather than the momentous implications of the statement after 25 years of uneasy EU membership.

Mr Brown easily brushed aside Mr Lilley, but faced criticism from friend and foe alike. Pro-Europeans such as Kenneth Clarke, the former Chancellor, and Labour's Tam Dalyell warned against bad timing — catching a train "when it is well on its journey", said Mr Dalyell.

On the five economic tests, there was no chance of Britain being ready by 1999, the Chancellor stressed.

Mr Brown is concerned that the British economic cycle is out of step with Europe. Britain has enjoyed six years of growth since leaving the Exchange Rate Mechanism but the rest of Europe has only just started to emerge from a long recession. Ministers fear joining a single currency in the short term would lead to lower interest rates, increasing the risk of another boom.

Criteria for joining

1 Whether there can be sustainable convergence between Britain and the other economies of a single currency
2 Whether there is sufficient flexibility to cope with economic change
3 The effect on investment
4 The impact on the British financial services industry
5 Whether it is good for employment

Car dealers charged over road rage deaths

TWO MEN appeared in court in Feltham, west London, last week to face charges over the death of a young couple in a road rage incident earlier this month, *writes Sarah Boseley.*

Jason Humble, aged 32, was charged with the manslaughter of Toby Exley and Karen Martin.

Keith Collier, aged 49, a motor trader, has been charged with "falsely reporting to police the theft of a motor vehicle on October 11, knowing the vehicle to be involved in a fatal road traffic accident on October 6, with intent to impede the apprehension or prosecution of another who had committed manslaughter", police said.

The two men were arrested at the same house in Farnborough, where they are believed to be the sole occupants. It is understood they run a secondhand car business, but are not related.

Mr Exley, aged 22, and Ms Martin, aged 20, died after their Ford Fiesta had been rammed three times as they drove out of London on the A316 dual carriageway at Hanworth.

Witnesses have said that a powerful white car following the Fiesta, whose driver was apparently angry that the young couple's car was not accelerating faster, forced them through the central reservation and into the path of an oncoming vehicle. The couple died in the resulting collision.

John Martin, Karen's father, said he was pleased to hear of the arrests. "It has lifted our spirits a little bit. It's still a bad loss," he said. It was important the killer was brought to justice over the deaths. "Nobody can get away with doing this to a couple of kids," he said.

● Almost half of Britain's drivers fear they will be threatened or come under attack in their cars, and half of women drivers feel unsafe in a multi-storey car park, a new survey by Mori found.

Historic bill to incorporate human rights

Alan Travis

THE Government last week handed Britain's judges the power to enforce a right to privacy and other fundamental human rights for the first time in UK law.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, confirmed that incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law is expected to lead to a new judge-made law of privacy to deal with press intrusion.

The publication of the Government's Human Rights Bill — launched as "Bringing Britain's Rights Home" — was welcomed, with the civil rights organisation Liberty describing it as the most important reform in its 60-year history.

Ministers have also left open the door to the creation of a new Human Rights Commission — which may take over the role of such bodies as the Equal Opportunities Commission — to help take test cases and create a "human rights culture".

Mr Straw said the legislation would mean that British subjects would no longer need to spend an average of £30,000 and five years to seek redress in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In future British judges would be able to enforce those rights in UK courts.

He added that the legislation would improve the protection of basic human rights in Britain. "The UK had a major role in drafting the convention but we have been almost alone in Europe in not incorporating it into our own law. Now, nearly 50 years later, the British people's rights are coming home."

It is expected that the impact of incorporation of the European Convention will go deeper than simply delivering swifter rulings in areas such as gay rights, abuses of the rights of suspects, and the freedom of the press.

Government and civil liberty lawyers expect the law to lead to the establishment of an effective privacy law for the first time.

Although the legislation is framed so that individuals can act against "public authorities" which abuse their rights, lawyers expect the courts to rule that victims of press intrusion could now seek redress in the British courts for the first time. They will be able to argue that the "public authorities" in the form of the courts and the Press Complaints Commission have been unable to provide them with redress.

Ministers have decided not to empower the courts to strike down offending Acts of Parliament, but instead judges will be able to declare that the law is incompatible with the convention. "It will almost certainly prompt the Government and Parliament to change the law," said the white paper.

● Strasbourg last week found Britain in breach of the convention for the 50th time. Judges at the European Court awarded £10,000 compensation to Stanley Johnson, aged 47, who was held in a secure mental hospital for 3½ years after he was pronounced sane because he could not be found a place in a supervised hostel. His case took more than four years to reach a conclusion in Strasbourg. The new law should ensure such cases are resolved much faster.

Comment, page 12

Religious intolerance law shelved

THE Home Secretary last week shelved plans for a new law banning religious discrimination, particularly against Britain's 1.5 million Muslims, and said legislation was highly unlikely before the next election, *writes Alan Travis.*

Jack Straw's announcement disappointed the authors of the first study of the extent of "Islamophobia" (irrational anti-Muslim hostility) in Britain, which argues that the race relations laws are no longer adequate for the largest ethnic minority in the country.

Mr Straw acknowledged there was a gap in the law, but argued it was a "sensitive and complex issue" unlikely to find a place in the parliamentary timetable before the next election.

"I recognise there is an important difference between religious and racial identity," he said. "I know some people feel race legislation is not the answer to the particular problems of the Muslim community. But religious legislation may not be the answer either."

Gordon Conway, who chaired the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims, said the term Islamophobia was now widely used among Muslim communities who had known about such discrimination all their lives. "It is an ugly word for an ugly reality," he said.

The commission's report, Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All, urged the Government to create an offence of incitement to religious hatred, rather than extend the blasphemy law, and for a new crime of religious violence to protect Britain's Muslim communities.

The report says of Islamophobia: "It is a serious and dangerous feature of contemporary affairs and culture. It is urgent that substantial measures should be adopted to confront it and reduce it."

It says it occurs at all levels of British life, citing an example of senior naval officers who last year argued against having Muslim seaman, saying, "Where would they pray to Mecca on a submarine?"

The report describes anti-Islamic prejudice in Britain, with Muslims sometimes seen as supporters of terrorism and of being engaged in a "clash of civilisations".

The commission also backs calls for the state funding of Muslim schools, and says that teaching about religion and history — particularly the Crusades and the spread of Islam — needs to be reviewed.

Some of the strongest criticism in the report is reserved for the press — both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers — for their repetition of the "mad mullah" stereotype, particularly in cartoons. The commissioners suggest there need to be "rules of engagement" to ensure media coverage is less negative and distorted. The report says the Press Complaints Commission should amend its code of conduct for journalists and editors.

Parents filmed torturing children

Alison Daniels

COVERT filming in hospitals has revealed that apparently caring parents assaulted their children when they were left alone with them. Some of the parents were later found to have killed brothers or sisters of the children under surveillance.

The filming was part of a study into child care. It targeted parents whose children had suspicious illnesses. The study concluded: "A proportion of serious child abuse is inflicted by severely disturbed, deceitful, but plausible parents.

"Covert surveillance has revealed that many such parents appear caring and kind in the presence of professionals, yet within seconds of being left alone with the child become cruel and sadistic."

In total 39 children were filmed with parents at the North Staffordshire hospital in Stoke-on-Trent and the Royal Brompton hospital in west London over a period of eight years. Parents of 33 children aged between two and 44 months were consequently charged with criminal offences. All but one of the children were put under care orders.

A further eight siblings of the children under surveillance were found to have died by suffocation in incidents thought previously to have been cot deaths.

Doctors, social workers and police had believed the 39 children were being subjected to life-threatening abuse by a parent. The children had been admitted to hospital with recurring episodes of unconsciousness, turning blue or halted breathing.

Deliberate suffocation was observed in 30 children under surveillance. Others were assaulted or poisoned with disinfectant or drugs such as anti-convulsants.

Of the children's 41 siblings, 12 had previously died suddenly. Eleven deaths had been put down to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or cot death, but later investigation, conducted as a result of the film evidence, found that four parents had suffocated eight of the children.

The 12th, thought to have died from gastroenteritis, was found to have been poisoned with salt. Other signs of abuse were indicated in the records of a further 15 siblings.

The report's principal author, David Southall, consultant paediatrician at North Staffordshire hospital, urged countries worldwide to take note and act to protect children at high risk. He said Britain had one of the best systems, but the study made clear that the aim of working alongside parents, as enshrined in the Children Act, failed to prevent abuse.

The Foundation for the Study of Infant Cot Deaths said that it would be "grotesque and unfair" to place the parents of cot death babies under general suspicion.

Gas guzzling to disaster

THE GLOBAL storm of criticism aroused by Bill Clinton's statement on global warming has had one positive result: everyone now knows that the United States accounts for a quarter of the world's output of greenhouse gases. The conclusion that the US should be required to make a correspondingly heavy cut is irresistible. Mr Clinton did not attempt to counter this logic except on the grounds that he faced domestic criticism on both flanks — and so would take the middle road. He has done a balancing act between the huge fossil fuel and automotive lobby and what he perceives as the green lobby and the rest of the world. It may be practical politics, but it is also playing politics with an environment that does not belong to the US.

Looked at from outside, Mr Clinton's plan is grossly inadequate and well below world expectations. It creates a damaging diplomatic split in what should be a common enterprise, ranging the US, Australia and Canada on one side, and China and the developing countries on the other joined by the EU. Britain is an important part of this entente, though the Government needs to resist the temptation to muffle its criticism of the US. In between is Japan, which is far more energy-efficient than the US and also has better targets. Worse still, Mr Clinton's fudge is a disincentive for anyone else to do anything serious, and threatens to sabotage the Kyoto conference in December.

The US proposal would also require China, South Korea and Mexico to accept at least some targets for it to be ratified by Congress. But Beijing and the other fast-developing countries are not going to act unless it is clear the US will take its fair share of pain. Why should they accept restraint when the main damage is being done by others? They will put their foot down as they did in June when the Earth Summit review conference ended in failure. Yet pain is precisely what the US gas-guzzling system seems incapable of taking. The steady growth in the US's greenhouse gas emissions — now at 12 per cent above the 1990 level — shows the futility of voluntary restraint. The White House argues that the Clinton plan would reduce emissions by 28 per cent "from the current path" by 2010. This is playing with figures based on the unacceptable assumption that the high growth rate will otherwise continue. The new proposal goes back on the Earth Summit commitment to stabilise emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. This hardly encourages confidence that even the new modest targets would be achieved.

Swapping arrangements of the type proposed by the US are not totally out of the question. One can imagine a scheme by which Washington would help Beijing with advanced technology to reduce Chinese emissions that could then be "credited" to the US score. But that is only politically feasible on the basis of a separate significant cut in US emissions. Action must begin at home before credit can be earned abroad.

There is a "common sense" view that because the US is the biggest and most powerful country in the world, it does not need to negotiate. There will have to be a deal in Kyoto based, as Mr Clinton proposes, on his plan. This is a concession too far to super-muscle-power. It would be better to postpone agreement by a year, while more pressure is brought to bear by governments and public opinion. In a greening world, US manufacturers may find themselves the target of increasing criticism — even boycotts. And they might — the auto companies included — begin to discover that there is money to be made by investing instead to combat climate change.

A milestone for human rights

THE HUMAN Rights Bill and its accompanying white paper published last week are to be applauded. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was not exaggerating when he described it as an "historic day". For the first time, a code of fundamental rights will be enshrined in British law. It is not an arcane issue of interest merely to constitutional theorists. Those who up to now have had to wait years before obtaining redress at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg — vulnerable minorities including prisoners, homosexuals and immigrants — will be able to argue for their rights in British courts. More than that, the bill could have a profound impact on the fabric of British political culture. Ministers and officials will in future be required to be "fully seized" of the implications for human rights before enacting new legislation. A parliamentary human rights committee will be set up.

Judges will in future flag up a "declaration of incompatibility" if they rule that a statute is in conflict with the European Convention of Human Rights (incorporated in the Human Rights Bill). Such declarations, according to the white paper, will "almost certainly prompt the Government and Parliament to change the law". But the Government rightly stressed that "parliamentary sovereignty means that Parliament is competent to make any law on any matter of its own choosing and no court may question the validity of any Act that it passes". This is a basic constitutional principle, emphasised not least with the Conservative opposition in mind. The shadow home secretary, Sir Brian Mawhinney, claimed that for the first time British judges were going to be able to tell Parliament what laws they should or should not pass on the basis of the view of foreign judges. He is quite wrong. As the white paper — entitled Rights Brought Home — points out, British judges will in future have more, not less, impact on European human rights jurisprudence.

However, the bill and the white paper do raise important, unresolved questions. For one thing, the Government has, at least for the time being, rejected a proposal for a Human Rights Commission that would provide an important role helping to promote awareness of, and access to, the opportunities provided by the new bill. For another, the European Convention lays down a number of rights, including the right to privacy, and the right to freedom of expression which, left on their own, will allow judges to rule on what in many ways are broad, abstract principles. The trouble with judge-made law is that it would be established on a haphazard, case-by-case basis, with no clear public interest defence or other entrenched safeguards that the British media needs. It cannot be right that controversial legislation such as that involved in the concept of privacy should be made by judges, with no discussion by Parliament at all.

In general, however, the Human Rights Bill is thoroughly welcome. It is an important foundation for other building blocks which should include a fully-fledged British Bill of Rights with stronger and more specific statutory bulwarks against the abuse of power by public and corporate authorities.

Europe on the choccy standard

GETTING agreement for a common European currency looks like parish pump politics compared with the civil war breaking out over the plans for a single European chocolate bar. Euro MPs last week voted by almost 3-1 to force Britain and Ireland to change the name of milk chocolate to reflect its actual ingredients. If their views prevail we'll have to get used to television commercials like: "And all because the lady likes cocoa bars with vegetable fat and high milk content". Fortunately the European Parliament doesn't have the last say in this matter. The row is likely to rival the debate over the euro, which it increasingly resembles.

Belgium is leading the dispute. It doesn't want the new Euro-choc to be weaker than its own 100 per cent cocoa standard — just as the German Bundesbank won't tolerate the euro being weaker than the mark. Britain boasts an attachment to chocolate going back centuries and fears a fierce campaign by the Sun newspaper to halt foreign recipes at Dover. This may have to be solved in the same way as the currency problem by setting up a Central Chocolate Bank to control the standard (don't laugh, something similar has already been proposed by Belgium) and to monitor convergence criteria. Only when all member countries have satisfied three basic criteria would they qualify — a vegetable fat ratio below a ceiling of 3 per cent by weight, price per kilo no greater than the three strongest economies and a milk content reduced to under 5 per cent over four years. In this way a strong single market in chocolate, ready to take on the rest of the world, will be completed by the time the euro circulates in 2002. People wondering whether their cash will be safer invested in chocolate or euros should remember this. Cocoa has already risen this year by 20 per cent.

Mixed feelings colour the Edinburgh mood

Martin Woollacott

NEW Labour, new Commonwealth? Some see the changes in the way the Commonwealth is presented and the ideas about its development that Tony Blair has proposed as a departure from tradition. Yet the most enduring tradition of the Commonwealth, and of the Empire before it, is of the periodic re-launch, assisted by state-of-the-art public relations.

The parallels with the past suggest that the Empire of yesterday and the Commonwealth of today are more alike than is usually thought. They share the problem of a disparity of peoples, faiths, and interests, which places obstacles in the way of attempts to bring about political, economic or moral coherence. Hence the relaunches, of which the last before this Government's effort was early in the reign of the present Queen. Such attempts, it seems, never wholly fail, but also never fully succeed. A century ago, at the Colonial Conference that first set in train the regular meetings from which Commonwealth conferences descend, another successful, populist British politician was grappling with this problem. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, was, like Blair, a fan of new technology.

The brilliant and very new imperial show of the diamond jubilee incorporated the Colonial Conference, at that time just of the colonies of white settlement. It was an attempt to put the Empire on a sounder footing by expanding trade, exploring military union, and reaching agreement, in effect, on the Empire's political purposes. The difficulty Chamberlain eventually had to recognise was that the Empire, self-governing white dominions and colonies proper alike, was a collection of autonomies that could not be marshalled by its supposed master, which had neither the power to coerce nor the resources to persuade them into policies that they did not want.

Chamberlain famously compared the Empire to a "great estate" that had been neglected but had huge potential for development. Blair's speech last week, in which he called for the Commonwealth to become an "economic powerhouse" repeated Chamberlain's theme almost word for word.

The revival of the "economic Commonwealth" was given impetus by the report last year of the Commons foreign affairs committee. Blair and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, have taken that report's conclusions on "the vast potential of the Commonwealth and the benefits to the UK of developing this with vigour" and run with them. The Edinburgh meeting has, for the first time, a theme: trade, aid and development.

The British government may find, as Chamberlain did in his day, that trade cannot be that easily reordered. But the difficulties with the economic priority go beyond that. There are many supporters of the Commonwealth who believe in its economic potential but still feel, first, that there is a muddle developing between the Commonwealth's economic interests and the marketing of Britain and, second — and more important — that the Commonwealth is nothing if it does not have a moral purpose. After all, it was the pursuit of British economic advantage that created so many of the difficulties Commonwealth countries now face.

By all means let us have an Edinburgh Declaration on economic co-operation, they say, but what about putting the Harare Declaration, on politics and human rights, agreed six years ago, into more effective practice? The attempt to give a systematic moral meaning to a territorial agglomeration that had come about through the exercise of British power began long ago. For Chamberlain, it was about the special responsibility of the uniquely gifted and therefore uniquely responsible Anglo-Saxons and the need to consolidate the Anglo-Saxon grip on the world. The evolution of that message into the democratic and anti-racist rhetoric, and sometimes practice, of today, is the intellectual story of the Commonwealth.

This year morality means, above all, Nigeria. Here, too, the influence of the past is critical. An African emergency, the Boer war, which some called Chamberlain's war, weakened the Empire at its zenith. African emergencies, in South Africa, Rhodesia, and now Nigeria, have shaped the Commonwealth. In Africa, the unsettled question of whether Britain did more harm than good in empire is most open. The Commonwealth has found itself condemned to repeat, most often because of Africa, a drama of what the historian Denis Judd calls "restitution and atonement".

THE concept of a free association of free states represents an ideal which breaks down in reality, at which point Britain takes the blame, and is supposed to take the lead in setting things right. Yet the snare of economic advantage and, in the past, of white racial solidarity, blunts her efforts. In the case of Nigeria, so do the mixed feelings of other African and Asian countries. The result is the essentially dilatory decision on the Nigerian question, which does little today but promises thunder and lightning tomorrow if the Abacha regime does not behave.

Blair says that Britain wishes to be "pivotal" in foreign policy, which is a large ambition, and that a renewed Commonwealth is part of his vision. If so, that Commonwealth needs both more resources devoted to it and more moral muscle exerted. Yet it may be that the essential function of the Commonwealth goes beyond particular decisions and even particular failures, regrettable though they may be. The conference is a psychic meeting place, as well as a real encounter. The issues of the past are engaged again, in the shape of current problems, but with the power values of the players changed. Britain, never so strong as it once appeared and never as weak as it has sometimes seemed, atones, and tries, through various means, to assert that the organisation embodies the best of empire, and keeps what was worth keeping.

The other members lurch between resentment, friendship, forgiveness, relish at changed circumstances and the thought of giving expression to the ultimate insult of indifference. For the Commonwealth is an organisation in which the line between reconciliation and revenge is, and perhaps will forever remain, a blurred one.

Confident Algeria rejects deal with IMF

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi in Algiers

SPEAKING to Le Monde on October 21, Algeria's 47-year-old finance minister, Abdelkrim Harchaoui, said: "Algeria will not be signing a new agreement with the IMF [International Monetary Fund]."

He said that Algeria was going to break free from the stewardship of the IMF in the spring of 1998, when its agreement with the international organisation comes to an end. As justification for this decision — which will restore Algeria's sovereignty but deprive it of a financial safety net — Harchaoui pointed to his country's "good health".

"We no longer need support to repay our foreign debt. General equilibrium has been restored, and revenues from oil exports are set to increase over the next few years," he said, while also pointing out that Algeria would continue to pursue a free-market economic and financial policy of the kind advocated by the IMF. "Algeria will still be pointing in the same direction," he added.

Harchaoui paints a positive picture of the Algerian economy. A slight fall in imports combined with higher gas and oil exports, which account for almost all Algeria's foreign earnings, enabled it to achieve a comfortable balance of trade surplus of $4.6 billion up to September, which is bigger than for the whole of 1996.

The balance of payments was also in the black, and foreign currency reserves have reached their highest level in the country's history. "The current figure is $7.5 billion, or the equivalent of more than nine months' imports," Harchaoui said.

To justify maintaining such high foreign currency reserves, when massive youth unemployment ought to be prompting the government to stimulate industrial production, Harchaoui cited Algeria's determination to be rated highly by the international financial community.

"Our foreign debt is $32 billion," he says. "Our reserves are there to prove that Algeria is a trustworthy partner, a country to which people can continue to lend money. Our creditors can be quite certain they will be repaid."

Harchaoui expects gross domestic product to grow by 5 per cent in 1998, a rate he says would have been achieved this year if agricultural output had not been affected by drought. To be able to face up to the problem of drought in future, the government has decided to give priority to water provision in the next budget, which will show a surplus like the two that preceded it.

Housing and higher education will be the other two budget priorities, according to Harchaoui.

Algeria intends to push ahead with its privatisation programme, which has been criticised by the IMF for falling behind schedule. Half a dozen of the 250 companies due to be sold off will be listed on the Algiers stock exchange which, it is planned, will reopen by the end of the year — with Canadian help. It will be located in the building that housed it before the country gained independence from France in 1962.

Harchaoui, who was elected deputy of the National Democratic Rally (RND) at the general election in June, is scathingly critical of France, which no longer maintains any financial ties with Algeria.

He regards the risk premium demanded by Coface, France's state-owned credit insurance institution, for Franco-Algerian trade as "excessive". "It makes French products more expensive without justification, and encourages our operators to turn to other suppliers."

The dispute is all the less likely to be resolved because, to Harchaoui's great regret, there are currently no plans for a bilateral meeting with his French opposite number, Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

(October 23)

Two women leave a polling station in Bentalha, near Algiers, after voting in local elections last week

Afrikaners set up 'republic'

Frédéric Chambon in Johannesburg

"THE Boer Republic is up and running," claims Fritz Meyer, the 30-year-old initiator of a plan for an independent Afrikaner territory located about 100km northeast of Johannesburg.

A prominent agitator in the ranks of the white South African far right, Meyer brandishes his membership form — 150 of which have now been signed.

The document, priced at $250, which bears the flag of the former Republic of Transvaal, entitles its holder to a 200-hectare plot of land sold by farmers sympathetic to the Afrikaner cause.

This kind of project is not new. Before the multiracial elections in 1994, a handful of extremists who feared the coming to power of a black majority bought the village of Orania, in southwestern South Africa, and turned it into a whites-only territory.

Three years after Nelson Mandela became president, the launch of a similar initiative confirms that the more extreme elements of the Afrikaner community still persist in rejecting a multiracial South Africa.

"We do not recognise the present government. Nelson Mandela is not our president — he's a criminal," says Meyer, who is practised in the art of provocation in speeches to South Africa's extremist parties, including Eugene Terre-Blanche's neo-Nazi AWB.

Meyer denounces a rising crime rate, employment policies tilted in favour of blacks, and the waning influence of Afrikaner culture. He says the creation of a "Boer republic" is justified because of the "discrimination" to which his people are subjected.

"It's a question of survival for the Afrikaner nation. Our country is in the hands of a communist regime that has plunged it into anarchy and is trying to eliminate us," says Meyer.

The aim is to enlarge the territory, now simply an agricultural estate bought by a co-operative, and turn it into an autonomous housing and agricultural business zone, before going on to ask for its independence.

Andries Campher, one of the first occupiers, sums up the philosophy of the scheme: "It's an act of peaceful resistance. We're not bothered by the blacks. If they leave us alone, we'll leave them alone too."

(October 21)

Tunisia's double-edged sword

COMMENT

THE predominant view in French government circles is that it is irresponsible to criticise the regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Tunisia, which he has ruled for 10 years, has eradicated serious poverty and illiteracy, despite having no great natural resources. It has an ever-increasing and enterprising middle class. It has successfully geared its economy to the needs of European markets, and is poised to take up the challenge of entering into a free-trade agreement with the European Union early next century.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have showered Tunisia with plaudits. After five years of free-market policies, per capita income has doubled. And the code of personal status — a legacy of Ben Ali's predecessor, President Habib Bourguiba — gives women's rights greater protection than anywhere else in the Arab world.

Compared with neighbouring Libya and Algeria, Tunisia cuts a fine figure. A favourite destination of European tourists, its 9 million inhabitants seem to have escaped the surge of Islamic fundamentalism for the foreseeable future. Ben Ali, a former head of security, has seen to that by imprisoning and torturing alleged Islamists and continually harassing their families.

The trouble is that, now that the evil has been rooted out, the machinery responsible for doing so is still in place. Tunisia is an arbitrary and sometimes brutal police state, which has cracked down on all Ben Ali's opponents — from the far left to the centre, including human rights activists and trade unionists. The fact that they are non-religious and often agree with some aspects of Ben Ali's policies makes no difference. Newspapers are gagged, intellectuals censored and telephones tapped. The freedom to travel is rarely granted to critics of the regime.

Fans of the regime in Paris talk about "a Tunisian model along Asian lines" — a blend of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism, which they regard as "very well suited" to a "still developing" country like Tunisia.

Leaving aside the condescending overtones of such talk, and while recognising the regime's genuine successes, one is tempted to ask whether — contrary to his desired aims — Ben Ali's fierce determination to crush all opposition might not eventually foster the emergence, or re-emergence, of radical Islamism?

(October 21)

Unsavoury facts revealed from the past

EDITORIAL

WAS it a good idea to try Maurice Papon, former prefect of police and budget minister, who is accused of having committed crimes against humanity early in his civil service career? Philippe Séguin, president of the neo-Gaullist RPR party, thinks not.

He has not said so in as many words, but there can be little doubt about the message of his diatribe in Le Figaro newspaper last month. He said things like: "Maurice Papon's trial is no more than a pretext", "in this affair the jurors and the law itself are no more than hostages", "a noxious atmosphere", "a manipulation of minds", "a worrying debasement of the public spirit", and so on.

In other words, he thinks the trial is a dirty trick aimed at France and at Gaullism. Séguin suspects Lionel Jospin's government of hoping, in an underhand way, to "bolster the National Front", and calls on French democracy "to keep its head".

It is tempting to give exactly the same advice to Séguin, who in this case is clearly being economical with the truth. His attack on the government and on public opinion does not align with the facts.

Jospin, one of the few Socialist leaders to have kept his distance from François Mitterrand — because of the latter's friendship with René Bousquet, head of the Vichy police — is not in any way responsible for the delays leading up to the trial. In any case the public debate triggered by the trial is not the result of any "machination", as Séguin claims.

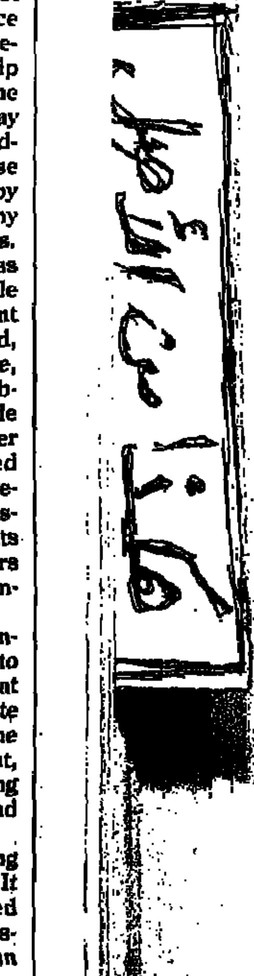
The Bordeaux court has uncovered two uncomfortable facts: first, that a civil servant loyal to the Vichy regime could, without showing any remorse, prove just as loyal to the republic founded by General de Gaulle; and second, that under De Gaulle, the newly fledged Fifth Republic was, like its predecessor, a secretive and repressive state capable of allowing its police to murder large numbers of Algerians with complete impunity, as it did in 1961.

France is doing the honourable thing in facing up to these facts. Contrary to what Séguin says, to forget or secrete them away is to play into the hands of the National Front, which has a habit of glossing over the Vichy regime and France's colonial wars.

In Bordeaux, a man is being called to account in a fair trial. It is an occasion that has enabled the French to discover that history is more complicated than Gaullist mythology would have them believe.

Instead of clumsily giving the centre stage to the far right, Séguin would do better to allow the trial to continue and the country to contemplate its past objectively.

(October 23)



Where men play second fiddle

Nicole Lapierre

Une Société Sans Père Ni Mari
(A Society Without Fathers or Husbands)
by Cai Hua
PUF 371pp 149 francs

THE Na community, high in the mountains of Sichuan province in China, upsets some of the best-established anthropological theories: it exists and perpetuates itself without fathers or husbands. This means that marriage and dual filiation, the very basis of the family as we usually know it, do not apply to all human communities.

In Na society, which Cai Hua analyses in Une Société Sans Père Ni Mari, free love is not a form of dissent, or a daring, blameworthy licence, but a rock-solid institution, and all Na children are — in Western parlance — illegitimate.

The 30,000-strong Na people live in the remote Yongning basin, which lies at an altitude of 2,760 metres near the border between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces. They are linked to the rest of the country by two roads; there is almost no mail service and only a skeletal telephone network.

In the not-so-distant past, only a few caravaneers reached the Na. Yet rumours of their strange customs began to filter through to the outside world from a very early date. Li Jing, for example, a writer who lived under the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), was upset by the indecent conduct of Na women. His contemporary, Marco Polo, spread the news to other continents. He mocked the "dolts" who "do not care if one of them touches another's woman, as long as it is the woman's wish", and who even encourage all the women of the household to offer themselves to strangers.

An anonymous early 20th century document mentions the cheerful disposition of the Na and describes how "a great number of traders who come from afar and travel through the region become attached to it and spend their whole fortune there".

In the sixties, Chinese ethnologists espoused the Engels-inspired evolutionist argument that groups like the Na, who had remained at a backward stage of group marriage, should go on to the final and desirable stage of matrimony. The effect of their publications was so unfortunate for the Na that when Hua came to tell the true story of their society he had difficulty in overcoming their mistrust.

The Na believe that, just as rain allows grass to grow, men are "waterers" who allow women to have children. Their role is necessary and beneficial, but nevertheless secondary, because the "bone", which is regarded as the vehicle of hereditary characteristics, comes from the mother. All those who are descended from the same female ancestor are said to be people of the same bone: they live together and share "the same pot and the same fire".

When a child is born, it automatically belongs to the mother's group. The kinship system, mode of residence and economic unit are all strictly matrilineal: the mother, her children of either sex and her daughters' children live together in each household from generation to generation. Any men in the household are necessarily brothers or maternal uncles. The latter play the role of the father, who does not even exist in the Na vocabulary.

Kinship exists only between those who have a common "bone", and are thus considered blood relatives. They are consequently bound by the prohibition of incest, which exists among the Na as it does in other communities. It is very strictly applied: there is a ban on any sexual allusion, risqué remark or even proximity between such relatives (they cannot travel at night or watch television together).

This strictness contrasts with the very great sexual freedom they enjoy outside their own lineage. The "furtive visit" is the Na's favourite activity. It always takes place at the home of the chosen woman, whose suitor joins her at about midnight and leaves at dawn.

Either the man or the woman can make the first step, and either may accept or decline the proposal if they wish. The only rule is that blood relatives should never witness any advances. Even if they know about their sexual relations — which are so common that a burglar caught in someone's house can wriggle out of the situation by claiming to be a "visitor" — they are not supposed to see or hear anything. Encounters are often short-lived. Young people are chiefly interested in running up a succession of relationships: young men and women of particular charm, beauty or ardour sometimes have more than 100 lovers.

There are, however, cases where the "furtive visit" becomes a "conspicuous visit", after an exchange of gifts and a welcoming of the suitor by the female head of the household without any men being present. But he is not, for all that, accepted as a resident. And other relationships may well persist — though the man and the woman usually have a tacit agreement to grant each other exclusive rights. Either of them may break off as they wish.

CHINESE communist authorities have regularly put pressure on the Na to change their ways. They think that the Na's lifestyle "hinders the people's awareness of the class struggle", and that it is counterproductive because all they can think of is sex instead of working, and unhealthy because it encourages the spread of venereal disease.

There have been four successive attempts at "matrimonial reforms". The first attempted to persuade the Na of "the superiority of socialist monogamy". On two occasions, in 1966 and 1971, a working party tried to impose marriage on all those who practised "conspicuous visits"; but most couples separated after it had departed.

In 1974, women were forced to name the actual or supposed father of their child(ren) and make this relationship official in order to receive their annual cereal ration. The result was a "social earthquake": young people did not dare meet any more for fear of ending up married.

But it is schooling rather than arm-twisting that has slowly changed things. Some Na teachers use the Chinese language to educate the community's youngsters (the Na language does not exist in written form). Pupils discover different values: their primary school manuals talk about fathers, not just maternal uncles. Biology tells them that heredity has nothing to do with the "bone" of the mother. It looks very much as though the Na's "bachelor society" — despite its persistence — will eventually disintegrate, and remain no more than an oddity in the annals of anthropology.

"The case of the Na shows that marriage and the family cannot be regarded as universal, either logically or historically," Hua says.

What then is the common feature of all human societies, apart from the prohibition of incest? Hua argues that it is the "desire principle" which encourages the possession of a partner or, on the contrary, a multiplication of relationships.

A given society can institutionalise only one of those contradictory systems, thus inhibiting the other. There are, therefore, "marriage societies" and, in the present state of our knowledge, only one "visiting society", that of the Na.

(September 12)

Philosophy with fanfare

Josyane Savigneau

Comédie
by Bernard-Henri Lévy
Grasset 278pp 115 francs

BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY'S Comédie is the latest episode of a career that began exactly 20 years ago with the publication of his controversial essay, La Barbarie à Visage Humain. Lévy, a handsome and wealthy young philosopher, wanted to play in the big league from the start. The trouble was that at that time his mentors cramped his style: Sartre was still alive, as were Lacan and Barthes, and there were some serious contenders to succeed them, such as Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Châtelet.

But with an intelligent, articulate person like Lévy on board, and with an editor (Françoise Verny) who had an innate sense of theatre, the mix was right and the so-called "new philosophers" proved immediately popular.

But to catch up with his masters and step into their shoes, he needed to do a lot of spadework, some of it behind the scenes. But the young Lévy did not, in his own words, "ask himself questions about the borderline between appearance and reality".

Now dubbed BHL, he experienced what he calls "the distracted projection" of his own energy. With his wayward shock of hair, saturnine eyes and open-necked white shirt, he became the intellectual darling of the media during the 1980s.



BHL: dissects a society that likes 'the putrid, the rotten'

As one might expect, that position involved him in a good deal of polemic and flimflam. It also required courage. BHL turned out essays (including a controversial one on France's Vichyist sore), novels, a not very successful play (so he could be seen as a "total" writer and intellectual, like Sartre before him) and a series of TV programmes.

He publicly committed himself to a number of grand causes, standing up for Salman Rushdie at a time when many were still too scared to do so, and for the Bosnians, with his documentary film Bosna. Last year, he made his first feature film, Le Jour et La Nuit. It was a total flop.

For 20 years BHL had been both unbearable, discerning, funny, stuck-up, provocative, stimulating, incredibly manipulative of others and perhaps more naive about himself than he imagined.

He had to face what he describes in Comédie as "sloth", the fundamental characteristic of an age which, "once it has recorded an image, is above all unwilling to let go of it, and once it has recorded a sound, wants to hear the same sound again and again *ad infinitum*".

He had been insulted by malice and envy: "I thought I was invulnerable. It all excited me. It prompted in me a degree of detachment, cynicism and contempt and a lot of hilarity."

BHL, the man who admitted he could no longer bear the "media caricature" he had become, suddenly saw the dark side of things. The failure of his film, which was not only slated by the critics but spurned by the public, was only the catalyst.

"There is nothing more ridiculous than a guy who has a belligerent vision of how ideas live, and who whinges when the scales are tipped *against* him. But this time it really hurt."

Out of that experience came Comédie, his first stab at a self-portrait, "not *mise-en-scène* but self-questioning", a watershed book which BHL describes as "carefully composed", but which gives the impression of having been written with an urgent need to speak out — and with, at the same time, a fear of doing so. For it is a fact that the man we used to see as being "enamoured of the media and self-promotion" had never before risked talking about himself.

Starting with an imaginary rendezvous in Tangiers with his "erstwhile teacher" — an easily recognisable Derrida — he embarks on a narrative that is based on "the great detour" caused by his film, and which enables him to answer a number of questions — those the film "posed but also left me to deal with", and the question of failure too, "and the place it now occupies in my life".

Although BHL admits in private that the film was probably a failure, possibly because the cinema is not his means of expression, in his book he sometimes lashes out at the wrong targets (such as auteurist cinema) and gets involved in fallacious arguments over form and content.

With great courage — he will get a lot of flak for it — he asks questions about writers who have become unchallengeable icons, "the great silent writers", or those who go on TV to explain why they refuse to talk or exhibit themselves. He expertly dissects a society that likes "the putrid, the rotten, the high" and flaunts its "celebration of the Perfecti", those whose writings are never likely to call anything into question.

BHL lingers on the case of Romain Gary, whom he knew and loved, and who lies at "the epicentre of the whole affair". He argues that "the dream of every writer who feels at bay" is to write a book under an assumed name (as Gary did, calling himself Emile Ajar). But is that not a way of vanishing for ever into appearance?

There remains a nagging doubt that BHL, who has an answer to everything, may be guilty of forgery. Is Comédie the portrait of a gambler or a comedy of truth? The ball is in the narrator's court. When BHL lists, with a remarkable lack of modesty, those who have attempted similar self-portraits before him, he quotes the Aragon of J'Abats Mon Jeu and wonders what risk one takes "when one lays one's cards on the table" and what risk is involved when "one pretends to lay them on the table but keeps them up one's sleeve."

Only BHL has the answer to that question. Has the answer begun with Comédie? It is only in retrospect that we shall know — as indeed he may too.

(October 10)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

The Right Balance On China

EDITORIAL

CHINESE President Jiang Zemin arrived in the United States last Sunday for the first U.S.-China summit in a dozen years and the first since the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square. That imbues this week's events with significance. What is important is not to burden the meetings also with undue expectations.

Mr. Jiang and President Clinton meet at a time when there is no shortage of sources of friction between the world's lone superpower and its most rapidly emerging potential rival. China's relatively closed markets contribute to a growing U.S. trade deficit, likely to hit $50 billion this year — second only to the U.S. deficit with Japan. China continues to arouse suspicions with its supplying of missiles, chemicals and other weapon components to what the United States reasonably enough considers rogue regimes.

Its bullying of Taiwan, its continuing brutalization of Tibet and its uncertain intentions toward Hong Kong all command attention. Allegations of illegal Chinese interference in U.S. domestic politics still are being investigated. Mr. Jiang's regime continues to stifle religious and political freedom. And there is a long-term question of whether the emerging superpower — led as ever by a Communist dictatorship — is gathering strength in order to challenge both America's standing in the world and the democratic values Americans associate with their world leadership.

It's quite a list. But President Clinton, after a journey of many way stations, has formulated a policy that argues for continued engagement despite these tensions. It's a policy that acknowledges the long-term risks, but also argues that China could evolve differently — as a cooperative superpower with a gradually liberalizing political system. That calls for dealing frankly on issues such as trade and human rights without making any single issue a litmus test or a basis for cutting off contact.

This is a policy of some coherence, and Mr. Clinton has enhanced its credibility in the past couple of years by firmly pursuing another aspect of it, less spoken of but equally important: the maintenance of a strong U.S. presence in Asia. By doing so, the United States reassures China's neighbors — and reminds China — that the United States intends to counterbalance China's growing strength.

Still, the administration's zigzag course to its current policy and suspicions of its susceptibility to pressure from commercial interests will continue to provoke anxiety about its ability to maintain a steadfast policy of engagement without appeasement. The mythical lure of the Chinese market has clouded more than one policymaker's vision, and most Americans will recoil if Mr. Clinton does not accord sufficient weight to the thousands of prisoners of conscience suffering in Mr. Jiang's gulag today.

Chinese President Jiang reviews a U.S. honor guard on arrival in Honolulu, Hawaii PHOTO ANTHONY BOLANTE

Money Talks Teamsters Into Trouble

COMMENT
E.J. Dionne

THE campaign money scandal that could have more long-term significance than the campaign finance scandal involving President Clinton and Vice President Gore may be the one only now getting serious public attention. It's the money laundering scheme set up to re-elect Ron Carey as president of the Teamsters' union. Guilty pleas have already been entered — though Carey insists on his own innocence. Carey's narrow re-election over James Hoffa, son of the Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa, has been overturned by a federal election officer. A new election must now be held and it's not yet clear if Carey will be allowed to run.

If you like irony, this is your case. Carey was elected as a reformer to cleanse the Teamsters of mob influence and racketeering. He's done as he promised. He's placed 70 corrupt locals into trusteeship.

He has done this as he has restored his union's fighting edge. His victory in the UPS strike showed that you could be both a foe of corruption and a tough planner, organizer and negotiator.

So why is Carey in such trouble? It turns that like his father, James Hoffa is a skilled politician. Carey expected to win an easy re-election. He ran a sluggish campaign while Hoffa hit the hustings hard. As the voting approached, Carey's polling showed Hoffa closing in. The Carey campaign panicked. In politics these days, when you panic, you look for more money fast.

Enter three longtime partisans of the liberal left: Jere Nash, Carey's campaign manager, Martin Davis, a direct mail specialist, and Michael Ansara, a liberal activist in Massachusetts who ran a telemarketing company. They concocted schemes to launder money into Carey's campaign and pleaded guilty last month to conspiracy and embezzlement.

The left did not want the Teamsters to fall back into the hands of the much investigated (and less liberal) old guard. It saw Carey as a powerful leader of a new era of union militancy. His Teamsters were a linchpin of the coalition that elected the new, more aggressive leadership of the AFL-CIO.

Even if their motivations were pure, what the three did was not only against the law, but also a disaster for the very causes in whose name they acted.

Carey denies he knew anything about what was happening. But the episode hardly reflects well on him even if he didn't.

Supporters of John Sweeney, the new AFL-CIO leader, can paint a nightmare scenario for their side. If Hoffa were to take over the Teamsters, they could be expelled again from the AFL-CIO. The loss of Teamster votes would threaten Sweeney's majority within the federation. The union factions that lost when Sweeney won could unite behind a new champion, and a movement which has enjoyed a certain new elan would be thrown into turmoil.

Allies Criticize Clinton's Warming Plan

William Drozdiak in Berlin

MAJOR U.S. allies in Europe and Asia criticized President Clinton's long-awaited plan to curb global warming last week as weak and ineffectual, claiming it does not measure up to U.S. responsibilities to protect the environment as the world's leading polluter and lone superpower.

The skeptical response to Clinton's package of incentives and modest goals reflects the new light in which the world has begun to assess American leadership in the post-Cold War era.

Clinton pledged last week to "harness the power of the free market" for an assault on greenhouse gas pollution, outlining a package of incentives and modest targets he said will counter global warming while allowing businesses to prosper.

Clinton released long-awaited details of his climate change policy in a speech to about 400 invited government officials and guests at the National Geographic Society's headquarters in Washington.

He outlined a strategy that beginning in 1988 would offer $5 billion in tax breaks and other incentives to U.S. companies to encourage rapid improvements in fuel efficiency and spur the development of new "clean-energy" technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But the specific goals and timetables he proposed for cutting international emissions fall far short of what some scientists and many environmentalists say are needed. They also are considerably less ambitious than the proposals proffered by other industrial powers.

The president's plan calls for stabilizing the industrialized world's output of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases at 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012 — followed by further, unspecified reductions by the year 2017. The European Union, by contrast, favors limiting emissions at 15 percent below 1990 levels by 2010.

In terms of the environment, the United States is being scrutinized to see if it is willing to accept sacrifices to cope with global warming that are commensurate with its overwhelming influence. By that yardstick, Clinton's prescription on how to curtail greenhouse gases has come up short in the court of world opinion.

Germany's environment minister, Angela Merkel, called the U.S. proposals "disappointing and insufficient." Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto lamented that "there might have been room for further efforts." Britain's deputy prime minister, John Prescott, said the plan does not go far enough, and he urged the United States to become "much more ambitious" in preparation for final negotiations on a global warming treaty in Kyoto, Japan, in early December.

"It is simply not good enough," said Peter Jorgensen, spokesman for the 15-nation European Union's executive commission in Brussels. "There must be something better coming from the White House if the United States wants to face up to its global responsibilities."

Most countries of the world tax gasoline so heavily — both to encourage energy conservation and to provide government revenue — that the fuel costs $5 a gallon or more at the pump. With prices about one-fourth that in the United States, the global warming controversy has convinced many foreigners that Americans are not just wasteful gas guzzlers, but a menace to the rest of the planet.

While administration officials sought to portray the Clinton plan as a balanced formula to accommodate the anxieties of industry and environmentalists alike, governments in Europe, Japan and the developing world say it is woefully inadequate for a nation that represents four percent of the world's population but produces 25 percent of the carbon dioxide and other gases that may provoke a disastrous rise in the earth's temperature.

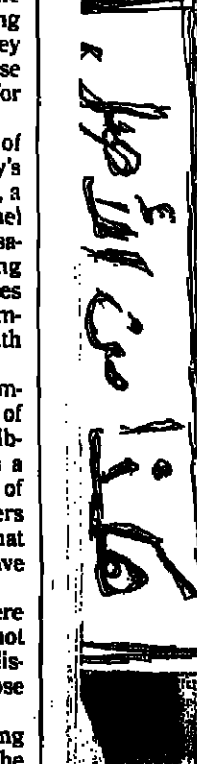
Greenhouse gases are produced mostly by the burning of fossil fuels as primary energy sources, such as coal and oil. The gases emulate a greenhouse effect by trapping the Earth's heat in the atmosphere and raising temperatures. Scientists say this warming effect will elevate sea levels by melting polar ice caps and cause drastic shifts in weather patterns, provoking floods in some areas and drought in others.

Clinton's plan was unveiled as delegates from 150 nations gathered in Bonn to try to narrow differences on a global warming treaty prior to the final round of negotiations in Kyoto. The Bonn talks will focus on two key goals: where to set targets for industrialized nations in curbing greenhouse gases and how to contrive a formula that would encourage developing countries to reduce emissions of their own over the next two decades.

Developing nations, led by China, Brazil and India, object to any restrictions on their emissions because, they argue, such measures would hinder their economic growth. They insist that developed nations should bear the brunt of any sacrifice because their industrial economies have largely spawned the global warming threat through the rampant burning of fossil fuels,

Europe and Japan have accepted that premise and proposed binding reductions below 1990 emission levels that are more ambitious than the goals of the Clinton administration.

Four years ago, Clinton vowed to return to 1990 levels by the end of the decade. But administration officials say he was forced to break that pledge because an unexpected boom in the U.S. economy has accelerated pollution levels. At current growth rates, U.S. greenhouse gas levels will rise 13 percent above those of 1990 by the end of the decade.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY November 2 1997

Lobbying Distracts Whaling Commission

Anne Swardson in Monte Carlo

SAVING the whales has come to this: After nearly 24 hours of vociferous argument, the international commission that regulates whaling was unable to decide last week whether one Indian tribe in Washington state should be allowed to kill four gray whales a year.

Instead, the International Whaling Commission passed a vaguely worded resolution that the American delegation said permitted the Indian whale hunt and opponents said did not. The issue now will move to the U.S. courts.

The debate was only one part of the annual meeting of the commission, the 50-year-old body that since 1986 has imposed a general moratorium on whale hunting in the face of near depletion of many whale stocks. Since then the commission has monitored compliance and regulated various exceptions to the ban, including for some aboriginal groups.

But the contentious debate served as a demonstration of the political power of the whale lobby, of the competing political appeal of aboriginal whale hunting and of the unavoidable fact that brond policies in such controversial areas as whale hunting are almost always influenced by hardball lobbying every step of the way.

Commission delegates, in fact, put off until their next gathering a serious proposal by Ireland for a partial resumption of whale hunting under limited circumstances. Several representatives worried that the commission was becoming so hamstrung by lobbying on both sides that it would never make any firm decisions on tough issues. "The rules of the game are partly dictated by the fact that there are observers who may exercise powerful lobbies back home," said Monaco delegate Frederic Briand. He added that he meant not just American environmental interests but also Japanese whaling interests.

The only real flap at last week's meeting was over the request made by the U.S. government on behalf of the Makah Indians of Washington's Olympic Peninsula to resume the practice of hunting whales, which they discontinued in the face of commercial competition and shrinking stocks more than 70 years ago.

The Makah, with a 1,500-year tradition of whaling, are the only American Indian nation in possession of a treaty right to hunt whales. Fearing litigation under the 1855 accord, the United States has been pushing for a Makah whale hunt for more than a year while opposing any resumption of commercial whaling around the world.

Environmental groups were adamantly opposed, fearing that, in the words of Patricia Forkan of the Humane Society, "this will open the way for commercial whaling around the world." Such nations as Australia, Austria and New Zealand agreed.

The Makah, their arguments went, literally had forgotten how to catch whales; when one washed up on the shores of Neah Bay in 1995, the tribe had to send to Alaska for someone who knew how to butcher it. The fear was that the tribe would win the right to hunt whales for food but would instead find a way around the current trading ban to sell whale products overseas. The Makah denied this.

Then the United States found some appealing partners: a tribe of Russian Chukchi Indians who did know how to catch whales, who had never stopped catching whales and who were poor enough to actually plan to eat what they caught.

The Americans paired their proposal with a Russian proposal to let the Chukchi catch as many as 120 gray whales a year off the Bering Strait. Nations that supported the Russians and opposed the Americans spluttered with indignation. "Nothing we have seen [about the proposed Makah hunt] persuades us their needs are established," Australian delegation member Chris Puplick said.

The resolution allowing whaling for both tribes was adopted on Thursday morning last week without a vote, but by the afternoon delegates on the floor were overheard asking one another whether they had agreed to allow the hunt or not.

Certainly, said the Americans, Mexicans and other allies — and the Makah. "That's the U.S. interpretation of what has happened here today," alternate U.S. commissioner Will Martin said. "It seems clear that the resolution constitutes acceptance of what we were proposing."

Not at all, said the Australians, the Austrians and the environmentalists. "They [the Americans] can do whatever spin control they want, but their arguments aren't going to fly when they get to court," said Humane Society lawyer Leesteffy Jenkins. In addition, there is some U.S. congressional opposition to the Makah hunt.

"I think the commission has been deliberately ambiguous," added a commission staff official.

Meanwhile, no action was proposed to deal with Norway, which uses loopholes in the moratorium to kill about 500 whales a year, or Japan, which in the name of scientific research kills roughly the same number. And with nowhere near the debate accorded to the American proposal, the commission agreed to let the Inuit, or Eskimo, of Danish Greenland increase their annual catch of minke whales by 20 whales a year.

The minke are not endangered either, but it was another indication, in the opinion of Danish scientist Erik Born, that "it's all political when it should be more scientific."

Generation Gap Divides Cuban Exiles

Donald P. Baker in Miami

WHEN pop singer Gloria Estefan recently defended a member of a local arts commission who suggested Cuban musicians should be allowed to perform here, she was subjected to a torrent of hostile criticism — and worse — from fellow members of the Cuban-American community.

Usually mobbed when she visits Little Havana, the sprawling political and cultural epicenter for Dade County's 675,000 Cuban Americans, the hugely successful Estefan who fled Cuba with her family at age 2 was snubbed by community leaders. Callers to talk radio shows denounced her, calling her names and questioning her patriotism and womanhood.

Although she was merely defending the commission member's right of free speech, Estefan had violated a rule that Miami's Cuban-American community has long held sacrosanct: Thou shalt do nothing, even indirectly, to support the Castro regime.

In 1996 Dade County put this rule into law with an ordinance prohibiting local governments from entering into contracts with any firm that does business directly or indirectly with Cuba. The ordinance has been interpreted to include Cuban artists because they are required to give part of their earnings to the Castro regime.

But even as she crossed the line, Estefan exposed what Liz Balmaseda, a columnist for the Miami Herald, called a growing generational divide between Cubans who fled their homeland nearly 40 years ago and their America-reared children and other newcomers that is beginning to challenge some of the old assumptions.

Estefan, in fact, is just the latest of the younger generation to encounter the ire of what University of Miami scholar Max Castro calls a Cuban-American "gerentocracy . . . that keeps change at such a glacial pace." Last year, a popular Little Havana restaurant was firebombed after it booked a 73-year-old Cuban cabaret show girl, forcing cancellation of her five sold-out shows. When a renowned Cuban jazz musician gave a concert at a downtown auditorium, protesters showed up and harassed and spat upon patrons as they entered the concert hall. Many of the patrons were younger Cuban Americans, eager to learn more about Cuban culture.

But for many older members of the Cuban community, these performers were seen as emissaries of the Castro regime who, therefore, should not be encouraged to appear in the United States and, if they do, should be boycotted.

Younger Cuban Americans here often say they are a generation caught between two aging men: Fidel Castro, 71, on the one hand, and hard-line emigre leader Jorge Mas Canosa, 58, whose Cuban American National Foundation is determined to continue the embargo against Cuba and remove Castro from power. The frail and ailing Canosa recently was hospitalized for a serious lung infection, prompting thousands here to attend a special Mass on his behalf.

Estefan's trouble began when she took issue with Dade County Commissioner Bruce Kaplan for firing his unpaid appointee to the county's Film, Television and Print Advisory Board, Peggi McKinley. McKinley had called for lifting of the 1996 Dade County ordinance.

Her dismissal "touched an issue that has been simmering for a long time," said McKinley, whose family emigrated to Chicago from Lithuania as displaced persons after World War II. McKinley, who spoke up at a public hearing in her capacity as the chair of a second volunteer group, the Miami Beach Fashion/Film/Television/Recording Advisory Board, said that while the city should "keep in mind the political sensitivities of Cuban exiles," it could not allow "the feelings of a few" to impede economic growth and development of the community as a whole.

The public hearing had been called after a French-based company, Midem, threatened to cancel the remaining four years of a contract with the city-owned Miami Beach convention center unless the ban on Cuban performers was lifted.

The ban was in force because the city appropriated about $25,000 to help woo Midem's first American show to Miami. The four-day Latin American and Caribbean Music Conference in September attracted thousands of music-industry officials from around the world and generated an estimated $20 million for the local economy this year.

Kaplan said he found McKinley's remarks "totally inappropriate and insulting to the community I represent," which includes Little Havana. When Commissioner Katy Sorenson supported McKinley, Commissioner Javier Suoto warned, "This might come back to haunt you tremendously . . . There are a lot of Cuban people out there who vote."

Estefan then weighed in. She supports the ban on Cuban performers but, in a letter to the Miami Herald, she wrote that "as an American, I am frightened to see one of our most basic liberties being trampled on in the march for political gain. As a Cuban American, I am embarrassed that non-Cubans might think that we are all narrow of mind. I cannot imagine how we could explain to the people of Cuba, who have suffered so much oppression, that the very freedoms that they so desperately desire and deserve are being annihilated in their name."

McKinley, who has enlisted the aid of the Florida chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union to seek reinstatement to her unpaid post, said she was "astounded" at Estefan's support, which she said took "tremendous courage."

Another popular young Cuban American, Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas, criticized McKinley's dismissal, but said he opposes granting a waiver of the ordinance to Midem that Miami Beach Mayor Seymour Gelber has sought.

"International conferences and cultural events, including Midem, will continue to seek our community as a venue precisely because Dade County is increasingly seen as the business and cultural capital of the Americas," Penelas wrote Gelber.



In Philadelphia the Million Women March focused on the message 'repentance, resurrection and restoration' PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GARDNER

Sisterhood Hits the Streets

HOPING to ignite a renewed sense of unity among women of African descent, hundreds of thousands of black women rallied for the Million Woman March, an assembly that at once resembled a family gathering, an intense and uncensored call to duty and a huge open-air bazaar, *write Michael A. Fletcher and DeNeen L. Brown in Philadelphia.*

All along the mile-long march site, flowing from the steps of this city's famed Museum of Art, marchers ignored the raw, damp weather last Saturday to pose for pictures with families, hug old friends and pore over the array of items being hawked by scores of vendors along the way.

At the same time on the main stage, singers and poets performed and a long line of speakers admonished black women to ignore their differences and unite as one.

"From this moment, sister, no longer will you walk by your sister and not acknowledge her existence," said Asia Coney, one of the two Philadelphia activists who called for the march.

The bulk of the marchers seemed disconnected from the intonations of the eclectic series of speakers, in part because the speakers' platform was barely visible from many parts of the assembly. A faulty, low-tech sound system didn't help the proceedings either.

But those problems seemed secondary to many of the women who gathered, often with the hope that they would be a party to history.

"You can tell this was important for a lot of women because they came without knowing a whole lot about it," said Johnnie Gettings of Chicago. "I came, because I wanted to tune into this. It was a sisterhood thing."

Africa Nations More Ready to Intervene

James Rupert in Kinshasa

AFRICAN governments have displayed a new readiness to intervene in neighboring countries in recent months. And Angola, which mounted a swift strike into the Congo Republic that helped end its civil war last month, seems to be one of the readiest.

After decades as colonies of Europe and clients of the Cold War powers, the African nations are acting more independently, including by using force against their neighbors. Uganda supported Rwandan Tutsis in a 1990-94 civil war that overthrew the Hutu-dominated government in Kigali, for instance. And Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Angola — and according to Western diplomats, Ethiopia and Eritrea — contributed to President Laurent Kabila's battle for power here in Congo, the former Zaire, last spring.

Now Angola has acted even more boldly — sending troops, tanks and warplanes into the Congo Republic's war, in full view of foreign residents and TV cameras, to help overthrow President Pascal Lissouba. None of these interventions has cost its authors more than a scolding by the foreign powers that once sought to control such situations.

The United States and European governments — and the international institutions they dominate, such as the U.N. Security Council — have to a large degree become marginalized as African leaders decide on moves — including military actions — designed to further their own national interests.

"We're not the main players any more," said a Western diplomat in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo. "African countries now have the military capacity and the will to intervene on their own account."

In the turmoil of central Africa, where eight contiguous states have suffered rebellions of varying intensity this year alone, several governments have been tempted to attack across their borders to strike at rebel bases. Angola's intervention in the Congo Republic's civil war, for instance, was the second time this year it has helped overthrow a neighboring government that was assisting the Angolan rebel movement, UNITA. Angola also intervened in neighboring Congo.

Rwanda also offered strong assistance to Kabila as he fought his way to power in Congo, largely because of Rwandan Hutu guerrillas based there and tolerated by the late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

In helping overthrow neighboring governments, Angola is not trying to establish itself as a dominant regional power, said a Western diplomat, adding, "There has been a very specific motive of strategic defense."

After 20 odd years of civil war, the Angolan government is desperate to force UNITA, Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, to abide by a 1994 peace agreement. But UNITA has failed to implement the agreement, instead rearming, first through Congo, when it was Zaire, and then through Lissouba's Congo Republic.

More than most African states, Angola also has the capacity to intervene. Its combat-toughened military of about 90,000 soldiers is one of black Africa's largest. And with military transport planes, "it has a modern airlift capacity, which no one else has — not even South Africa," a diplomat said.

A militiaman loyal to Sassou-Nguesso, whose victory was assured by Angolan troops, guards a checkpoint in Brazzaville PHOTO: GEORGE MULALA

But Angola's willingness to carry battles beyond its borders has only limited success, diplomats in the region point out.

Angola intervened against Mobutu partially because he had provided UNITA's main supply line. His top aides ran flights to deliver arms and supplies to UNITA territories and to buy the diamonds that UNITA mines to finance its operation.

As Mobutu fell last spring, UNITA scrambled to move its arms stocks out of Congo — much of them to Congo Republic just across the Congo River. Supply flights were shifted to the Congo Republic's port of Pointe-Noire, U.S. diplomats and others said, making the second Angolan intervention necessary.

Angola's intervention against Lissouba permitted rebel leader Denis Sassou-Nguesso to seize the capital, Brazzaville, and left Pointe-Noire in the hands of the Angolan forces and Congo Republic forces on the side of Sassou-Nguesso. Those victories appeared to herald an end to the war.

In the days since, however, Sassou-Nguesso's continued progress has been less certain. Sassou-Nguesso represents a small tribe, and it is unclear how he might build a coalition capable of ruling. Lissouba and a third militia leader, Bernard Kolelas have vowed to keep fighting. Kolelas said that he has 4,000 fighters who will continue a guerrilla war.

Angola also has failed to get all it sought in helping Kabila oust Mobutu last spring. According to sources in Congo and Angola, planes have continued to fly to UNITA bases, ferrying in supplies and bringing out diamonds for sale.

A source based in Luanda, the Angolan capital, said he saw a plane with a Congo registration number at the UNITA base in Cuango this fall. And, he said, U.N. military observers protested to UNITA at being barred from inspecting similar planes at Cuango and other bases. The source said there is no evidence that the continued traffic includes weapons.

Nonetheless Angola "is very angry with Kabila," said the Luanda source. He said the Angolans had not concluded that Kabila's government is responsible, believing that the traffic may be conducted by Rwandans, who were Kabila's chief backers against Mobutu.

In addition to the problem posed by rebel presence across borders, central Africa is strewed with the losers of decades of civil wars — army units, militia groups and individual soldiers scattered, often in impoverished exile, in camps, in the countryside or mixed with refugees or local residents.

These dislocated fighters often can survive only as mercenaries or bandits.

Rwandan Hutu fighters who lost their civil war in 1994 and soldiers of Mobutu's defeated army reportedly fought for pay on both sides of the Congo Republic's 4-month-old war. Perhaps 7,000 other Rwandan and Mobutu fighters have fled to northern Angola, finding refuge in UNITA-held territory, analysts said.

Brazil: A Giant in the Midst of Change

Anthony Faiola in Brasilia

IN THE heart of this capital city, the Palace of the High Plateau, Brazil's equivalent of the White House, often has stood as a national monument to dashed hopes. Leaders, many of them military dictators, would issue bold but empty promises from these stark white halls as the poor grew poorer and corruption infested the palace like termites.

In these same halls a new sense of credibility, stability and upward mobility is taking root in Latin America's largest nation. The shift stems, experts say, from a democratically elected intellectual, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who has won domestic popularity and international respect for the economic and political transformation he has set in motion in Brazil — a country bigger than the continental United States and with a population greater than Russia's.

Brazil's new order, although still fragile, holds strong implications for the United States, which is discovering that this nation is demanding a more-equal footing with Washington. Brazil is muscling into the role of the hemisphere's second voice on the world stage, seeking a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. And, as the core of a fast-growing trading bloc called Mercosur, a South American variant of the European Union, it has succeeded in influencing politics and economics throughout the region.

Indeed, one of President Clinton's missions on his visit last month was to sell the Brazilians on a massive Free Trade Area of the Americas — something the Brazilians fear may hurt their economy if implemented too quickly, and, experts say, they could easily block.

"When Nixon came here [in the 1970s], he said, 'Where Brazil goes, Latin America goes,'" said Alexandre Barros, a Brazilian political analyst. "At the time, it was just flattery . . . Now it's true."

Cardoso, who came to power in 1994 after a long line of disappointing administrations, including the impeached Fernando Collor de Mello, is credited with ending hyper-inflation, opening up the economy and restoring a measure of faith in this country's highest office. His approval rating stands above 60 percent, one of the highest in South America, and pundits say his road to re-election next October likely will be softer than the cheese bread so popular here.

"The people have food in their bellies," said Roberto Macedo, an economist at the University of Sao Paulo. "But they also have refrigerators and ovens now, too. In Brazil, that's powerful motivation to like your president."

Yet serious problems continue to plague Brazil, a country with a long history of poverty and social crises. Even as his economic policies have improved the lives of the poor, critics say the gains may not last because Cardoso is not taking the bold steps necessary to close the country's massive gap in the distribution of wealth. In Brazil, 5 percent of the people control 95 percent of the land.

There also have been nagging concerns that Cardoso has focused more on changing the constitution to allow for his re-election than on enacting the social security and tax reforms he has promised.

Critics also say he is moving too slowly to privatize state-run industries, that his administration has become permissive on logging in the Amazon and that he has not done enough to curb corruption and police brutality, the subject of a number of recent human-rights reports.

Cardoso responds that one must look at how much Brazil already has changed during his term. "Not just because of the economy," he told a group of reporters, "but because we are now putting on the table our social problems. The Brazilian government is not trying to cover up what is wrong in Brazil."

Since taking office, Cardoso's biggest impact has come through economics. A former leftist university professor who once conducted weekly study groups on Karl Marx, he did an about-face to embrace free-market theories by offering Brazilians his "Real Plan."

The plan opened Brazil to foreign investment and linked its currency, called the real, to the U.S. dollar. The plan ended hyper-inflation.

The Real Plan has best aided this nation's vast legions of the poor, experts say, by giving them extraordinary new buying power. With the value of the money in their pockets more stabilized, the poor have received access to credit, enabling them for the first time to purchase such goods as microwaves, televisions and refrigerators. The cost of basic foods like bread and milk has decreased.

The number of people living below the poverty level in Brazil has dropped 9 percentage points, to 21 percent nationwide, during Cardoso's first three years in office.

But the plan has come under criticism both inside and outside Brazil, and from both the left and right. Some of the loudest clamor has come from the middle and upper classes, a relatively small segment of Brazil that had found ways of benefiting from hyper-inflation by putting their money in speculative bank accounts. Now affluent Brazilians also have discovered that many of their costs — such as real estate and eating in restaurants in posh neighborhoods — have gone up.

Cardoso is also facing mounting pressure from the massive Landless Movement of the rural poor — 50,000 of whom marched on Brasilia this year to protest the slow pace of land reform. This popular movement has evolved into the country's most potent political voice of dissent. It has won sensational news coverage of its controversial "land takeovers" throughout the country, which have sometimes turned violent and which Cardoso has condemned.

"He is not responding to the biggest problem facing Brazil — land reform," said Sister Michael Mary Kolan, attorney for the Sao Paulo-based Sem Terra movement. "If we weren't pushing him . . . he would not be doing and saying [anything] at all."

Opponents of Cardoso on the left argue that the alliances he had to form with right-wing parties to win election have made it more difficult for him to undertake reforms opposed by Brazil's traditional oligarchy. They also say he has not invested enough in national infrastructure or education.

"He has not made the structural reforms necessary," said Ciro Gomes, a former high-ranking member of Cardoso's party who is viewed as his only serious challenger for re-election. "His plan is fragile. We will only see a onetime gain for the poor if we don't make 'fundamental changes. We're still not spending money on the right things."

Cardoso has tried to bring more foreign investment into Brazil through a massive privatization effort, second only to China's. But the level of foreign investment in Brazil still is not as high as during its brief boom in the 1970s, and some critics say Cardoso has not moved fast enough to sell off the real prizes, the state-owned giants like the oil and telephone companies.

More than once, however, Brazil has teetered on the cusp of success only to fall. Some economists say its foreign debt and trade deficit may foreshadow problems in the years ahead if the government does not take steps to avoid the kind of crisis now happening in Asia. But the sheer size of the changes under way in Brazil, specialists say, make its momentum pretty convincing this time.

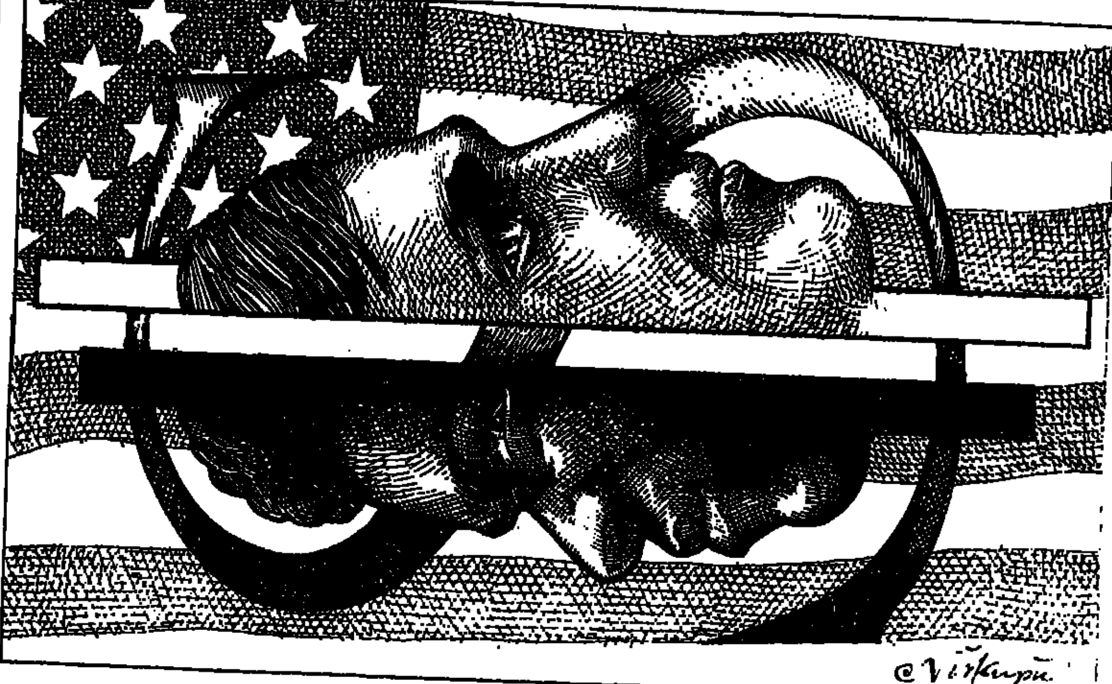
America's Abiding Dilemma Over Race

Richard D. Kahlenberg

AMERICA IN BLACK AND WHITE
One Nation, Indivisible
By Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom
Simon & Schuster. 704 pp. $32.50

LONG WAY TO GOD
Black and White in America
By Jonathan Coleman
Atlantic Monthly Press. 451 pp. $26.50

A COUNTRY OF STRANGERS
Blacks and Whites in America
By David K. Shipler
Knopf. 607 pp. $30



AS THE president seeks his place in history through an initiative on race, a trio of important new books has been published with comparably high ambitions. Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom's America In Black And White seeks to update, 50 years later, Gunnar Myrdal's An American Dilemma. Journalist Jonathan Coleman's Long Way To Go aspires to explore race relations in Milwaukee in the early 1990s in much the same way that J. Anthony Lukas's classic, Common Ground, described the Boston busing crisis of the 1970s. And journalist David K. Shipler's A Country Of Strangers comes with the built-in expectations that follow his 1986 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Arab And Jew.

To my mind, Shipler's book, a moving and elegant portrait of contemporary black-white relations, is the strongest of the three. If A Country Of Strangers is occasionally unbalanced, it nevertheless accomplishes a daunting task: It credibly explains, through a white writer's eyes, the pain and anguish of the daily black experience in America, particularly the burden of having to live with enduring stereotypes that peg black men as criminals and black women as welfare mothers.

Shipler, a former New York Times reporter, spent five years crisscrossing the country, and concludes that not a day passes when most blacks don't think about race. Toward the end of the book, he describes a race-relations workshop in which minority participants were paired with whites. The leader asked individuals to stand if they felt they had to leave their culture at the door when they went to work. Many of the blacks stood, but none of the whites. Which of them had been stopped by the police because of their color? Again, the same result.

Then, Shipler writes, he "asked the question that I had never asked: How many of us had considered not having children because of racism? I caught movement out of the corner of my eye and turned and saw the young African-American woman, my partner, push her chair back and rise as gracefully as if she were at a funeral. I looked up into her sorrowful eyes, and she looked down into mine, through the immense distance that had been revealed between us."

At times, though, Shipler appears so overwhelmed by the persistence of racism that his reporter's skepticism is impaired. At one point, he uncritically cites sociologist Andrew Hacker's experiment in which Hacker asks his white students what they'd have to be paid to be black. A million dollars a year, the students reply. Obvious evidence of the price of racism, Hacker and Shipler conclude. But if Hacker's premise — that white skin has monetary value — is true, then presumably black students would pay to become white. But Hacker doesn't ask them, and if he did, one supposes that, taking appropriate pride in their history and culture, they would respond — as the whites did — that they would need many millions of dollars to make the change.

At another point, Shipler says that conservative attacks on affirmative action and welfare are simply a sophisticated way of hurling the old racist slurs. Under the new standard, he says, "You can't speak of black people as indolent, but it's all right to urge that (black) welfare mothers be required to work. You're not allowed to characterize black people as incompetent, but you may preach the abolition of affirmative action because it promotes 'unqualified' blacks over 'qualified' whites."

It is no doubt true that racism pollutes the discussion of welfare and affirmative action, but both issues present tough public-policy questions involving the clash of important values. Many nonracist Americans are animated by adherence to principles of hard work and nondiscrimination, and if one is truly seeking racial healing, it is foolish to dismiss these views as mere manifestations of racism. In all, Shipler spends less than five percent of the book on our most vexing racial issue, preferential affirmative action. This reticence is not entirely surprising. After one has painstakingly built a powerful case that we should not negatively stereotype blacks as criminals and welfare mothers, it is hard then to defend the two major strands of affirmative action that profoundly rely upon stereotype: the "diversity" rationale resting on the assumption that there is a "black point of view"; and the equal-opportunity rationale resting on the assumption that blacks, no matter what their economic status, are more disadvantaged than whites.

But in most cases, Shipler sees the complexity of the issues, moving beyond the liberal morality-play of white racists and the conservative morality-play of undeserving blacks. He's for opening up the traditional Eurocentric curriculum but refuses to embrace the more fantastical notions of Afrocentrism. He's savvy enough not to defend misogynist rap lyrics just because their authors are black, and notes that in fact rap often feeds feelings of white supremacy. He acknowledges that blacks, who make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, commit 51 percent of the country's robberies and 54 percent of its murders. But he also notes that because crime is segregated, a white person is 5.6 times as likely to be murdered by another white as by someone black: "If fear were logical, whites would be more afraid of other whites than of blacks," he writes. In the end, readers are likely to come away from this book with new insights and a better understanding of our contemporary racial dilemma.

Journalist Jonathan Coleman, formerly of CBS News, is less successful in capturing the essence of American race relations in Long Way To Go. Coleman starts with a promising approach — using the city of Milwaukee as a prism through which to view race — but unlike Lukas's Common Ground, the book has no coherent story to tell.

Coleman begins in 1990 with the sensational threat by the head of the Black Panther Militia to engage in sniper attacks on whites if conditions in the inner city did not improve by the end of 1995. But this threat ultimately proved empty, and so the story meanders from the Jeffrey Dahmer murders to local reaction to national developments, such as the Clarence Thomas nomination and the L.A. riots. The result is at times a reporter's memoir driven not by local events so much as his schedule of interviews with assorted figures. Disappointingly, the book contains little about the racial dynamic of Milwaukee's noteworthy school-choice program, which provides vouchers for inner-city youths to attend private schools.

Today, left and right have largely converged to ensure that race remains America's proxy for class

Still, Coleman's larger subject is important. Whereas much of what passes for racial discussion today focuses on whether upper-middle-class blacks should receive admissions preferences at Princeton, Coleman takes on America's greatest remaining failure in race relations: the perpetuation of the urban underclass. Coleman's outrage is properly focused on society's tolerance of a ghetto environment where kids sleep on the floor to avoid bullets, and where 11-year-olds plan their funerals instead of birthday parties.

Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom's America In Black And White is more scholarly than the other two — he teaches history at Harvard, she's a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute — and their unvarnished and powerful description of the horrors of Jim Crow serves as a good counterpoint to the commonly heard plea that racism is as bad as ever. In 1940, there was not a single black policeman in the Deep South states where 40 percent of blacks lived, and in that year black poverty stood at 87 percent. In 1944, when Myrdal wrote, a majority of whites said that "white people should have the first chance at any kind of job." In 1958, just 4 percent of Americans approved of interracial marriage. And in 1962, Colin Powell, about to leave for Vietnam, was driving through Virginia with his wife and could not find a gas station that would allow him to use a bathroom.

In the book's core section, on public policy, the Thernstroms do much to expose the sloppy thinking of affirmative-action proponents. When Bill Clinton's assistant attorney general for civil rights cites cabdriver discrimination as a reason for racial preferences in employment, education and contracting, the Thernstroms ask: What precisely is the connection? While rejecting absurd genetic explanations for group inequality, they also demolish the myth that all such inequality can be attributed to discrimination. The difference in earnings between black and white families is smaller, they note, than the difference between the earnings of whites generally and those of Americans with Chinese or Latvian ancestry.

But unfortunately, the authors don't stop there. While the Thernstroms try to pose as moderates, their policy analysis places them well to the right of center. To take one important example, they are hostile not only to racial preferences but also to a 1971 Supreme Court decision, Griggs v. Duke Power, which established a rebuttable presumption that employment practices resulting in a statistical racial imbalance in the work force are discriminatory. The decision, which allows employers to justify imbalances with nonracial explanations, represents to most people a fair balancing of competing interests. The vote among the justices was 8 to 0, and it was codified by the U.S. Senate on a vote of [illegible] 5 in 1991, but the Thernstroms nevertheless criticize it.

At times, the authors seek to [illegible] Myrdal's opposites, showing [illegible] ways in which black civil rights leaders, just as surely as white supremacists, fail to live up to the American Creed. But unlike Myrdal, the Thernstroms don't travel around the country talking with people, and so give undue attention to the words of black demagogues. On the issue of intermarriage, for example, it is quite true that black leaders like Louis Farrakhan have made openly racist statements in a way that white leaders generally do not. But among average blacks and whites, the Thernstroms' own data show, blacks are significantly more likely to approve of black-white marriage than whites (68 percent vs. 45 percent), and so Myrdal's old story of white racism is ultimately confirmed.

The Thernstroms' major policy recommendation is that we abolish racial preferences; but, astonishingly, they lay out no agenda for what is to replace racial affirmative action. They criticize fellow conservatives for being unwilling to admit that "there was a terrible history of racism in this country, and [that] too much remains," but then offer no solutions, not even conservative boilerplate about school choice and enterprise zones.

Taken together, these three books demonstrate the very different ways in which Americans view black-white relations. Much more disturbing, to my mind, is the authors' apparent agreement on two very questionable premises.

First, across the gamut of political ideology and disciplines, their titles unashamedly tell us that they are concerned not with race in America but with a subset: black and white. At one time, this limited focus made sense. When Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote The Negro Family in 1965, the available census data was limited to white and nonwhite — which mattered little, Moynihan noted, because almost all nonwhites were black. Today, the narrow focus on black and white is quite simply anachronistic. For instance, when Jonathan Coleman blames white cab drivers for not picking up black passengers, he seems oblivious to the fact that, in many cities, the vast majority of the cab drivers are not white.

The second premise, broadly shared by the authors, is that America's central problem involves race rather than class. In 1968, as riots swept the nation, Robert Kennedy told journalist David Halberstam that "it was pointless to talk about the real problem in America being black and white, it was really rich and poor, which was a much more complex subject." But today, left and right have largely converged to ensure that race remains America's proxy for class. President Clinton seeks his legacy in appointing yet another advisory commission on race, rather than taking the truly pathbreaking step of addressing, at long last, the enduring issue of economic inequality.

There is much to learn from these highly ambitious books on black-white relations, but in the end, they may not have been ambitious enough.

Richard D. Kahlenberg, a fellow at the Center for National Policy and author of The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action, is writing a book on economic desegregation of the public schools.

Southeast Asia in turmoil: **Nick Cumming-Bruce** in Bangkok and **Andrew Higgins** in Hong Kong report

Thais seethe as economic noose on jobs tightens

SCENES of horrific carnage at Bangkok's Thammasat university are to feature on a "historical wall" to be built on campus, including sculptures commemorating key events on Thailand's path to democracy. Some wonder if, by the time of its expected completion in two years, there will be a new episode warranting inclusion, *writes Nick Cumming-Bruce.*

Turmoil in stock markets around the world last week makes the question of interest beyond Thailand and even Southeast Asia. The assault on Hong Kong's share market and currency at the centre of the financial drama followed a sequence of events that started when Thailand broke its currency's link to the dollar in July.

And in the same way that Thailand's economic woes triggered a critical reaction from investors to weaknesses in other Southeast Asian tiger economies, so street protests in Bangkok by the middle classes exposed another dimension to regional misfortunes.

As the International Monetary Fund wades in, prescribing austerity, countries relying on rapid economic growth to smooth over deep-rooted ethnic and religious tensions face the growing risk that mass frustration and bitterness will boil over into violence. Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines face elections in the coming year which could provide a focus for discontent.

A Bangkok garage sale last weekend, catering for yuppies, exemplified what for some analysts is the consoling thought that the threat may be more apparent than real. Rows of everything from Mercedes-Benz to Rolex watches illustrated the contention heard in other Southeast Asian capitals that the economic crunch is hitting hardest the middle classes. No revolutionary impulses there, the argument goes.

This comfortably ignores the price workers are paying for the economic downturn and mountains of short-term corporate debt imprudently accumulated by their bosses. Two million or more Thais, and a similarly large number in Indonesia, stand to lose their jobs as the downturn bites next year.

Paradoxically, Bangkok's protest ebbed last weekend, less because the embattled prime minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, revealed a new cabinet line-up late last week than because he will now rush through legislation clearing the way for elections in February under a newly drafted constitution.

The fear among economic analysts is how an already bitter public will react if Mr Chavalit uses the next few weeks to subvert the new charter and, as he did last year, buy his way to victory with rural votes.

Plans for Thammasat's wall emerged on the anniversary of the 1976 storming of the campus by a rightwing mob, who murdered any students in their path. It was, according to Banthoon Lamsam, president of one of Thailand's biggest banks, an example of what can happen when Thais lose control. Reflecting on the political mess, he warned: "Things will boil and boil and explode."

China watches as Hong Kong burns

WHEN the silent, terrifying storm hit last week, British architect Graham Powell found himself stranded on a Hong Kong construction site with a group of nervous builders, *writes Andrew Higgins.*

"We were talking about ceilings and plumbing, but they all kept looking at their watches. I couldn't work out why everyone was so uninterested. Suddenly the meeting was disbanded, and they were all on the phone shuffling stocks and buying dollars."

Unsure what was going on, Mr Powell returned to his office. His desk was covered with messages from his girlfriend: "Go to the bank and buy dollars!"

Across Hong Kong panic spread like wildfire — not the noisy, wild-eyed panic caused by physical danger but the stunned, mute fear of 6.4 million people looking over the edge. Hong Kong was supposed to be different from the rest of Asia, where currencies fall, markets crash, and froth about Confucian miracles turns to dust. It had not binged on easy credit. It had not grown fat on corruption. It had barely even blinked at the hoisting of the red flag over a metropolis of unalloyed capitalism.

As recently as September, Joseph Yam, head of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, boasted to the Institute of International Finance that the much-hyped handover from British to Chinese rule had, in the end, been "rather uneventful". He said he had always predicted a "rather dull year" and then crowed to his audience: "I am glad that this has, more or less, turned out to be the case. Even the volatility of Asian currencies did not affect the Hong Kong dollar."

Mr Yam, who gets paid $1 million a year for such insights, last week stood at the eye of the storm. It swept from screens flashing in the skyscrapers of Central, Hong Kong's business district, lashed across Mr Powell's building site, through factories in Kowloon and into bars in Wanchai and then battered London and New York.

Like all typhoons, it passed. By Friday last week the Hong Kong stock market recovered nearly half the 10 per cent lost the previous day, when the market recorded its biggest point drop. Bank queues thinned as the peg tethering the Hong Kong dollar to the American currency held, and speculative fever raced north to ravage the Korean won instead. Overnight, interbank interest rates came down from stratospheric heights.

Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's chief executive, declared victory. Returning from London, where he had met Tony Blair to intone a mantra of "business as usual since the handover", he warned off predators: "We will make sure they do not succeed in whatever they are trying to do."

Hong Kong is in better health than Thailand, Indonesia or Korea. Its economy dominated by services (82 per cent) instead of manufacturing, Hong Kong operates the world's fifth largest foreign exchange market, the busiest container port, and sits on the rim of one of the globe's fastest growing economies.

But last week's turbulence was more than a freak accident. Marc Faber, a local investment guru, has long warned the end is nigh. He calls his newsletter for investors the Doom and Gloom Report and infuriates Hong Kong's cheerleaders. He missed his moment of vindication but, calling from Barcelona, he predicted more gloom: "We have had the first wave. Now we have a rebound. Eventually, everything is bound to go lower. This is just the beginning."

On the bedrock of Hong Kong's prosperity lies one of the world's most inflated property markets. A 750sq ft flat in a New Territories concrete block costs $650,000. Underpinning such madness is an axiom: too many people, too little space. Prices, the theory goes, can only go up. This dogma is showing signs of fatigue. It has also severely damaged Hong Kong's competitive edge as a place to do business.

If Mr Tung's determination to defend the US dollar link propels interest rates too high, the property market will wobble and could even crash. "I think we are in for a property meltdown. It will not happen overnight but will be a slow process, like in Japan," predicts Mr Faber. "This process is always painful. In Hong Kong it will be very painful. So many people have money in property."


An investor sees Hong Kong stocks tumble PHOTOGRAPH LARRY CHAN

The less lugubrious hope for a managed "correction" in property prices that will improve rather than shatter Hong Kong's "prosperity and stability" — the credo embraced by Britain in China when it fixed Hong Kong's future in 1984. Should this turn into a recession, however, developers and families who have mortgaged their lives to buy a flat would not be the only ones screaming. China would, too.

While the handover has played no major role in last week's panic, it has altered the equation fundamentally. Had the British government ever seen Hong Kong as anything other than a potential headache — and a treasure trove for Conservative party fund-raisers — they would never have allowed Sir John Cowperthwaite, the colony's financial secretary from 1961-71, to enshrine "positive non-intervention" as a guiding philosophy.

For China, though, it is different. Hong Kong not only helped kick-start China's economic reforms nearly two decades ago, but its capital markets are now crucial to the Communist party's ambitious privatisation of state industry. It needs a buoyant market in Hong Kong to raise funds. A collapse could cripple the entire venture.

Mr Tung, unlike Sir John, has to report to people who want him to do more than simply keep Hong Kong out of their hair. China would prefer to retain the US dollar peg as a point of pride, but if it becomes too painful Mr Tung will be reminded that what is good for China is good for Hong Kong. Any hint it might make would be eagerly seconded by Hong Kong industrialists, who think staying in line with the US dollar is making Hong Kong exports too expensive.

Hong Kong's great asset is the resilience of a population mad about making money. But these same people panic. And if panic takes hold, no amount of lecturing on strong fundamentals from Mr Tung will bring calm.

At a busy intersection across the road from a Wanchai karaoke parlour on Friday last week, dozens of people huddled around flashing screens. The carousel of the market had started turning again. "It is our sport," said Lau Kwok-kin, a cook from a nearby Cantonese restaurant. "You can see. Hong Kong is now stable again. I must admit, though, it did get scary."

In Brief

FRAUD investigators across Europe are to widen their investigation into allegations that a huge money laundering and insider dealing ring has been operating for years in Amsterdam. The scandal left the Dutch coalition government struggling to contain a crisis of confidence in fraud controls at one of Europe's busiest bourses.

THE complex battle for control of US telecoms group MCI took another twist with rumours that one of its suitors, WorldCom, is seeking the support of US regional telecoms company SBC to add a cash element to its all-paper offer. Meanwhile MCI posted a third-quarter loss of $182 million.

BOEING, the world's biggest aircraft-maker, was forced to admit that it had been caught on the hop by the boom in orders for new airliners and would be forced to shell out $2.6 billion to meet production targets.

GERMAN car markers BMW and Daimler-Benz emerged as front runners in the race to buy Rolls-Royce Motors, which was put on sale by Vickers.

EUROPE'S car makers are showing signs of recovery on the back of sales growth fuelled by new models and more competitive exchange rates. Three leading manufacturers — VW, BMW and Volvo — all reported higher third-quarter figures.

MICROSOFT, the software group under fire from competition authorities, reported record first-quarter profits even after a $296 million write-off related to its purchase of WebTV. Net profits rose nearly $50 million to $663 million. However, it was not all good news for Bill Gates. He saw $1.5 billion wiped off his paper fortune as Microsoft shares were caught up in the Wall Street crash.

LONG-TERM prospects for deep coal-mining in the UK, involving 8,000 jobs, look bleak after the Government ruled out intervention in the coal market.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 27	Sterling rates October 20
Australia	2.3935-2.3966	2.2304-2.2333
Austria	20.50-20.52	20.31-20.34
Belgium	60.06-60.16	59.51-59.61
Canada	2.3142-2.3103	2.2674-2.2698
Denmark	11.09-11.10	10.99-11.00
France	9.76-9.77	9.678-9.689
Germany	2.9132-2.9166	2.8869-2.8898
Hong Kong	12.79-12.81	12.62-12.63
Ireland	1.1153-1.1174	1.1052-1.1076
Italy	2,846-2,850	2,819-2,821
Japan	201.50-201.74	197.63-197.92
Netherlands	3.2852-3.2882	3.2525-3.2561
New Zealand	2.6532-2.6568	2.5362-2.5397
Norway	11.73-11.74	11.57-11.58
Portugal	296.60-296.82	294.08-294.42
Spain	245.64-245.90	243.47-243.68
Sweden	12.62-12.64	12.39-12.40
Switzerland	2.4076-2.4102	2.3981-2.4006
USA	1.6556-1.6565	1.6300-1.6310
ECU	1.4749-1.4770	1.4652-1.4670

FTSE 100 Share Index down 370.3 at 4840.7. FTSE 250 Index down 140.8 at 4767.6. Gold down $12.35 at $312.85.

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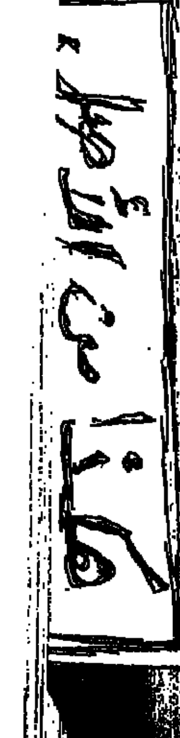
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In 1958, Britain gave Christmas Islanders a present that would last a lifetime. **Barry Hugill** reports

Poisoned legacy

THE TOURIST clothes gave her away. If the elderly white woman squatting in the centre of the palm hut had worn a simple black dress and a wide-brimmed hat she could have passed for one of the missionaries who landed in 1857 with Bibles and prayers. But it's 1997, and Jess Munn is not a missionary. And in any case, the family she is talking to declared for Jesus many years ago, living, as they do, in the Republic of Kiribati, the most devout Christian nation on Earth.

Few have heard of Kiribati (part of what were the Gilbert and Ellice Islands), and even fewer know how to pronounce it. It was two days before Mrs Munn realised she was in Kih-rih-bahss: on an island she'd always known as Christmas Island (now Kiritimati), the largest of a scattered group in the Central Pacific granted independence by the British in 1979. "Discovered" by Captain Cook on Christmas Eve 1777, it lies two degrees north of the equator, 4,800km miles from California, 6,500km from Australia. Cook thought it unfit for human habitation, but he was wrong and it became the remotest outpost of the Empire, a fearsome place where the temperature rarely falls below 25C at night and can rise to 50C during the day.

Britain brought Christianity to Kiribati and a century later delivered another present: a series of H-bomb tests — with awful consequences for a local people who have never been to war and, to this day, never had an army.

Although not a missionary, Mrs Munn is on a pilgrimage. An Elder of the Church of Scotland, she arrived here last week to retrace the steps of her husband, who died of leukaemia two years ago. Phil Munn was a soldier in 1958 and witnessed the giant mushroom cloud — in fact, he was ordered to watch it by his officers.

Munn was not alone. In all, 12,000 men, mostly conscripts, were exposed to radioactive fall-out in the Christmas Island tests. Up to 60 per cent of those troops suffered illness as a consequence. Many have died, some in the most horrible circumstances. To this day, their sons and daughters are prone to genetic disorders. Munn and his comrades were made to parade on the beach as the bombs went off. The troops were dressed in standard army gear for the tropics, shirt and shorts, without goggles or protective clothing. Nor did they have radiation checks afterwards.

It was no accident that the troops were there. In fact, you could say that Munn was murdered by the British government. Classified documents unearthed at the Public Record Office in London make it clear that one purpose of the tests was to ascertain the effect of radiation on soldiers. His widow still finds it difficult to talk about. "He died a bitter and angry man," she says, her head shaking, still unable to comprehend how anyone could allow such an experiment to be conducted.

Munn would not talk to his wife about the tests but frequently spoke about the islanders. Mrs Munn arrived on Kiribati armed with a photograph of a woman called Nemi clutching a child to her breast. Munn took the picture in the fifties, and on the plane descending to the tiny landing strip his wife holds it in her hand, confident its subjects will be found. And so it was that the 64-year-old former tax officer from East Kilbride, near Glasgow, found herself squatting in a palm hut, thousands of kilometres and a hundred years from anything she had ever experienced.

Kiritimati has no television, no newspapers, nor radio. But news spreads rapidly and Nemi was soon tracked down. She is old now, her husband even older. The two sit on the floor, stiff-backed, bemused by the arrival of the white woman in her strange European clothes. The photograph of Nemi is produced and slowly they comprehend. A neighbour translates Mrs Munn's explanation and soon there isn't a dry eye in the hut.

Speaking through an interpreter is never easy, but Mrs Munn does her best. As she tells of the death of her husband, one wonders if she will be able to continue. It's hesitant, stilted, painful to watch. Finding Nemi is part of the process of coming to terms with the death. What ought to be private has become public. Nemi's husband has only one leg, his hands are crippled by arthritis and he winces as his visitor shakes hands. As Mrs Munn talks haltingly to the couple, giant crabs scuttle back and forth and hundreds of ferocious-looking dragonflies hover. It is unbearably hot and the mosquitoes are biting. The villagers gather round to gawp.

At one point, a middle-aged woman emerges from the crowd — she is the child in the photograph. Her father speaks, gestures to her, and she goes away, to reappear with a necklace of local stones for the honoured guest. Mrs Munn bursts into tears. It's a while before the guest regains her composure: "It's so hard to say what I feel. Nemi was in tears and she thanked *me* for coming to see her. And they are so very poor. I expected poverty but not like this. I feel so humble."

Travelling with Mrs Munn is another Scot. Ken McGinley is 59 and has been unable to work since 1973 — made sick, he believes, by nuclear fall-out. He witnessed the tests and his face is scarred by the blisters that erupted days after the explosion. Like many test "veterans" he is sterile.

He takes Mrs Munn to the spot where he and Munn were forced to parade. "It was a glorious day, April 28, 1958. We were told to sit on the beach and a voice came from the Tannoy. 'Three . . . Two . . . One . . . Zero. Cover your eyes.' I had my fists shoved into my eyes and my back to the area where the bomb was going off. There was a flash and I was able to see straight through my hands — the veins, the blood and worst of all I could see the flesh itself. There was a scorching pain and I screamed. 'Look at the bomb now,' ordered the voice on the PA."



One of a series of Pacific nuclear tests in the fifties PHOTOGRAPH TOPHAM

Three days later, the blisters started to appear on his face, hands and neck; his leg became numb. The army doctor told him not to worry. Ginger Redman, Mr McGinley's mate, was probably told the same. A few days after the blast, Redman died — the cause of his death was "unknown".

That evening, Mrs Munn says how she felt that Phil was "with her" as she had stood on the beach in the afternoon. "I know he was there. He was talking, telling me I had done the right thing in coming. He said, 'Well done, hen.' "

One reason she has come to Kiritimati is to see if the islanders suffered in the way the troops did. As she and Mr McGinley travel round, it becomes apparent there are very few old people on the island. The local doctor confirms this — very few people, he says, live more than a few years beyond 50.

Eritane Kamatie was the chief medical officer for Kiribati. He is now the only doctor, ministering to all 3,000 islanders. It is a hopeless task. Walking round the local "hospital", Mrs Munn is staggered: "I've got more medicine in my bathroom cupboard." The doctor is one of the few old people on Kiritimati. "We do the best we can, given our resources." If he has any resources, it is not clear what they are. The hospital, he says, does not even have plasters.

He tells of a patient in her teens who died recently of leukaemia. Her parents were on Christmas Island at the time of the tests. Of course, he suspects the obvious but he shrugs his shoulders. Kiribati lacks the technology to do the necessary tests. "If a patient has cancer . . . well, that's the end," he explains.

This is a country without records. When people die there are no inquests, no certificates. Dr Kamatie has only been here a short while. All of the evidence he has about the effect of the bombs is anecdotal: "Older people tell me stories. Radioactive fallout is carcinogenic. People living here have reason to be scared."

AT THIS point, the doctor changes the subject. He talks about the tonnes of equipment the British left behind here. After a pause, he presents, calmly and matter-of-factly, a hypothesis. Suppose they left it here because it was radioactive?

The two Scots went searching for the debris. It's not hard to find. No attempt was made to hide it; if one didn't know otherwise one would have thought the army was in retreat, abandoning all in order to escape. By a lagoon, there are hundreds of oil barrels and Mrs Munn goes to investigate. She quickly retreats — a colony of rats has made them home.

Mrs Munn says how she felt that her husband Phil was 'with her' as she had stood on the beach in the afternoon. 'I know he was there. He was talking, telling me I had done the right thing in coming. He said, "Well done, hen." '

Off the beach, two little boys fishing from the top of a rusting bulldozer. The few postcards of Kiritimati show a tropical idyll but it's not so much paradise, more a carcinogenic rubbish tip. Mrs Munn cannot believe what she is seeing. She utters constantly: "How could we leave it like this?"

That night, Australian aid workers, working on a badly needed sewage system for the island, explain the extent of the problem. By a quirk of geography, Kiribati will be the first place on Earth to see January 1, 2000. The potential for tourism is obvious and the Kiribati government is eager to make the most of it. But shortage of water and poor sanitation are major obstacles. The new sewage system is crucial to development. They have produced a report for the Kiribati government that makes frightening reading.

"The British have left . . . hundreds of rusting drums and jerry cans that produce thin layers of bitumen by seepage . . . As you travel, you discover more rusting drums, abandoned cars, trucks and batteries. Because of drought, wells have had to be sunk and sticky black matter has been found on top of the water table. Derelict and dangerous water tanks stand abandoned; ablution blocks, liquid gas cylinders — still charged with gas. This borders on criminal negligence. Asbestos-lagged boilers, old buses, building rubble and two large transformers. Extremely toxic carcinogens. The British should remove it."

The debris is ugly, but more worse, it is toxic. At best, the water supply is being contaminated by heavy metal poisoning. At worst, it contains radiation. Mrs Munn has two questions: "Why did we leave behind so much expensive machinery? What were we frightened of?"

David Yeeting is the Kiribati government representative on the island. He, and the government, are in a difficult position. Kiribati is exceedingly poor and cannot afford to upset potential aid donors. Mr Yeeting tries to be diplomatic: "Many people complain of illness. We have asked the aid agencies to test for radiation. I don't want to blame the British but they thought they owned the island. They carried out the tests, then abandoned the rubbish. Many families believe it has caused the deaths of fathers and mothers. But we don't have the records to prove it. We can't afford to clean up ourselves. The British should accept responsibility."

For seven days the two visitors were treated like royalty. Homes were opened and meals prepared. Only towards the end did they realise the sacrifice involved. At the best of times Kiritimati has little food. There is no starvation because of the ocean and the fish, but fruit and vegetables are scarce. Fish and rice is the staple diet, but last week the rice was running out. Yet villagers were happy to share what little they had with foreigners.

Defenders of Britain's colonial heritage point to the roads, the hospitals, the schools that the Empire brought. The troops did build roads here, but that was the extent of it. Kiritimati has but two legacies of British rule — Christianity and radiation. Evidence of the former is abundant, to prove the effects of the latter is more difficult. Or is it? The island has few visitors and boasts just one "tourist attraction". It stands proudly, a few hundred metres from the ocean: a seven-headed palm, the only one in the world. Palms are supposed to have one head. "Do you know the scientific term for that?" asks an Australian aid worker. "Mutation." — *The Observer*

Can we no longer bear the naked truth?

A recent custody case in Britain has highlighted a culture of suspicion around nudity in the family. **Maureen Freely** is shocked by the puritanism

BRITISH judges can be disapproving, says Lady Justice Butler-Sloss, but they should never be shocked. That was where Judge James Wigmore got it wrong at a custody hearing last June, when he decided in favour of the father because the mother had allowed their nine-year-old son and six-year-old daughter to spend five minutes in the bath with her fiancé. Although he did concede that the two reprobates had made a promise in good faith never, ever, to do such a horrid thing again, he still saw fit to remark that he had known children to be taken into care for less, and that he found the attitude of social services "startling".

Lady Justice Butler-Sloss took him to task for these remarks when she overturned his decision last month and ordered a new custody hearing. "The judge appears to have allowed his instinctive reaction of the uninhibited behaviour of this couple . . . to override everything else in this case," she said. "He was plainly wrong. These are perfectly decent, respectable people. They may have been unwise, but there was nothing to suggest the children were at any risk of abuse."

She went on to say that in a "happy, well-run family, how members behave in the privacy of their own home is their business and no one else's". Does that mean it's safe to get back into the bath? Not quite. She went on to say that although she did not doubt this couple's "innocence", they may have been "careless and indiscreet".

Society has become more concerned about the treatment of children in the past few years; this means that everyone has to be more sensitive about matters such as nudity in the home and even on the beach. And the people who have to be most circumspect are new partners.

Which sounds like very sensible advice. What exactly does it mean, though? How does it translate into real life? Two things worry me. One is this generous offer of privacy to all families that are happy and well-run — but, by implication, not to any family that tends to chaos or is in any way troubled.

What are the criteria here? And who is the judge? For example, I think my own family is as happy and as well-run as any could be, given the circumstances under which we operate. But I am aware that many people out there would put it into the unhappy, chaotic category simply because it includes two sets of children from previous marriages, plus another two younger children born out of wedlock. And so I take care, just as Lady Justice Butler-Sloss advises.

When the older children are in the house, I am mindful of the fact that anything I do could get reported back to their other parent, taken out of context and even end up in court. I never run the bath without thinking: "Let's see, who's here today? Is it going to be enough to lock the door, or should I make sure I am *seen* to lock the door? Will the towel to hand make me 'decent' enough when I walk back to the bedroom, or should I be fully dressed?" So far, I have not had to resort to bathing fully clothed.

Splashing out: Fun at bathtime could become a thing of the past PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN HARRIS

I am fortunate in that both of the other parents are sensible people who would not jump to suspicious conclusions without good cause. On the other hand, I cannot forget that one of them took a child to a doctor to discuss a problem with balance (after the child had been seen falling over in the school playground). The first thing the doctor asked, when she saw the bruises on the child's legs, was: "Tell me, when you stay at your other house, do they beat you?"

ANYONE who has been the object even of informal questioning will know that once the suspicion is planted in someone's head, it's very hard to talk them out of it. That's why I put so much effort into suspicion prevention. But here we come to the other worrying thing Lady Justice Butler-Sloss said — about standards and attitudes around children having changed over the past few years.

She is right, of course. What was perfectly all right five years ago could well land you in court tomorrow. I had a nasty jolt last autumn when, just after I had taken a roll of holiday film to be developed, I remembered that it contained not one, but *two* photographs of my then three- and four-year-old daughters naked in a Greek garden.

The circumstances were, as they say, innocent: we had just come back from the beach, they had just had an outdoor shower — in front of many Greeks who, like me, didn't think anything of it, because it's perfectly acceptable there for little ones to go without swimming costumes. Now suddenly I was thinking about what the TV newscaster Julia Somerville and her partner went through over similar photographs.

As it happened, nothing happened. But when I picked up the pictures, I looked at them in a way that was not at all innocent. Instead of admiring their little shapes, their tan marks and smiles, I was anxiously checking their genitals, and noticing with embarrassment that, in one picture, one child had her hands cupped in a way that drew attention to them.

I'll be more cautious in future. But what about my wicked past? Are our new standards of suspicion retroactive? If they are, I'd better start burning my photo albums. They contain 18 years' worth of beach and bath nudity, not just of my own children, but also of friends' children.

Should I be worried? Carolyn Douglas, a family therapist who is the founding director of Exploring Parenthood, assures me that I'm taking my new awareness too literally. Good parental judgment, she says, is never one-sided. "It's living on a balanced edge," she explains. "One's picking one's way along a track, looking down one side, and saying, oh no, I don't want that, and then looking down the other side, and saying, no, I don't want that either.

"The requirement for parents is that they should not sexually distress children." Equally, they should not make them feel ashamed of their bodies. Inevitably, some parents would make mistakes, but it was enough if they learned from them.

Is it realistic to expect parents to adapt such a happy-go-lucky approach in the present climate? Our suspicions about abuse these days know no bounds. Even if one accepts a particular photograph of a child in a bath is "decent and respectable" and therefore "innocent", there remains the worry about what the "wrong sort of person" might do "if he got his hands" on the negative.

Even if judges and lady justices agree that a five-minute bath with mother's boyfriend does not equal abuse, there's still, says Tiffany Jenkins, of Families for Freedom, "that element of doubt. Still they're implying that these people were a little bit unwise." The moment you draw a line, and say, it's probably all right because these are decent people, you're assuming, and without waiting for proof, that "there's a large minority of parents wandering around indecently". You're encouraging parents to ask themselves constantly if they could be, could have been, might one day become, that sort of person. And it is that, as much as real abuse, that makes the innocent gaze close to impossible these days. Our new awareness, Jenkins says, "assumes the eye of the beholder belongs to an abuser".

We are not making the world safer by pandering to bugymen. We are just focusing on genital sexuality at the expense of sensuality and tenderness. We are falling back on to our old puritanical ideas about the body as the source of all evil, and we are setting up walls between ourselves and our children that the Victorians would have found . . . yes, I think the word I'm looking for is shocking.

Daloni Carlisle meets the woman who convinced a Japanese business that fair trade can benefit everyone

Equal to the challenge

WHEN Charlotte di Vita first sold fair trade goods to a Japanese mail order company, it was almost a disaster. Their computer told them they could shift 1,000 of the hand-crafted pendants she was offering; their customers ordered 13,000.

Summoned to the Kobe HQ to explain, she told them: "You put into your computer that it's a three-inch pendant with a certain cost. But it's not programmed in that there is a fair trade aspect, where people are being given employment in a very poor area and that the profits are going to pay for agricultural improvement." She suggested that they diversified to build on all this goodwill. The company agreed. But that still left her with the problem of delivering 12,000 extra pendants from a workshop in Ghana that could turn out 1,000 a month. They were given 28 days to deliver. They did it.

The story is typical of Di Vita's unconventional approach to business. She set up the charity Trade Plus Aid and its associated trading arm in 1992 after witnessing an impending famine caused by drought in northern Ghana, where she was on holiday. "You see people with nothing to plant, you know they are facing famine, and your level of what's possible and what's not disappears. I had £800 [$1,300] in my pocket and I knew I had to turn that into the £30,000 they needed to buy seed — and do it fast."

So she asked them what they could make that she could sell. The answer became the fashion item of jewellery that year — carved wooden figures sold as pendants. They sold out in Camden Market, London, and the farmers couldn't supply enough to meet the demand. So she moved the operation to the larger cities of Kumasi and Accra. They now make $400,000 a year each and trade independently.

She ploughed back the profits into Bawku West, the area she had first set out to help, working with the development charity ActionAid. Farmers in the area now have a community seed bank, which loans them seeds for a season. They repay it with seed generated through that year's harvest. They've begun dry-season cropping, soil composting, tree planting and stone bunding — building a ring of stones around fields so that rainwater stays in the fields rather than running off. The women have started a collective farm to grow cotton, which they pay local weavers to make into fabrics that are sold locally.

The profits have also been used to build a school for shepherd children, who were missing out on education because they spent all day tending livestock. Di Vita paid for the materials; the community built it.

Always putting money into existing projects where craftspeople were paid a fair wage for environmentally sustainable work, she now supports 18 producers across three continents, employing 295 people — who in turn support 1,475 family members. The profits are used to help communities help themselves.

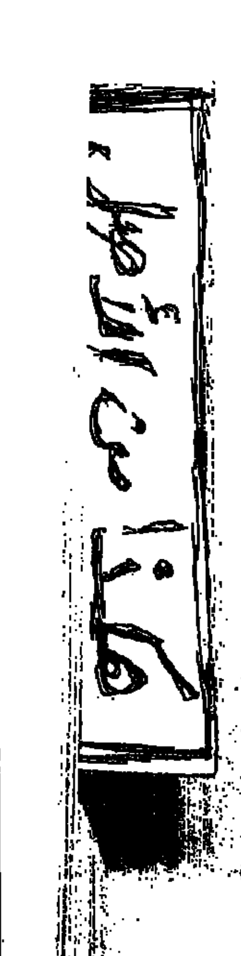
Having established links with 300 traders in Europe and the United States, she decided not to expand her empire but to put traders in developing countries in direct contact with Western markets and let them get on with it. "I figure they don't need me any more, and I don't want this organisation to grow; I don't want to be responsible for all the jobs here." So she concentrated on developing new markets.

Trade Plus Aid is not the only player in the fair trade market, which started in the 1970s and is now worth an estimated $70 million in Europe and the US.

Oxfam and Traidcraft dominate the alternative trading market in the UK. The UK market is shifting, with more emphasis on quality and increasing availability of food for which producers are guaranteed a fair price for their crops. "People will pay more for something they want that is ethically produced," says Rachel Wilshaw, Oxfam's fair trade adviser, "but they won't pay for something they don't want or that is not good quality."

Meanwhile Charlotte di Vita is in the process of putting traders in developing countries in direct contact with the Japanese, who "find it very hard to understand that I want to give away my supplier base.

"People also find it very hard to understand what Trade Plus Aid is about. It's is not purely charity, but it's not purely business either. My focus is not on raising money for aid, but on getting people employment and training in business so that they can become self-sufficient."



Letter from East Timor Mark Harris

Rough ride on Integration Street

THE open arms of the statue Christus emerge from the morning mist high above Dili as we sail into the 27th province of Indonesia: "motherland" to returning students, "frontier" to arriving traders and transmigrants from across the Indonesian archipelago. Beyond, a squad of troops enthusiastically drill past the harbour — a perfectly-timed reminder of the continuing conflict in this far-away flashpoint. Welcome to East Timor.

This former Portuguese colony recently "celebrated" its coming of age after forcible integration into the Indonesian nation. Banners proclaiming 21 years of Indonesian rule line the streets, whilst *Merah-putih*, the red and white Indonesian flag, decorates endless government bureaux. In downtown Dili, Javanese and Bugis traders are in the driving seat; booming super-woofers signal business as usual. The project of integration appears complete.

I take a bus crammed with chickens through dry savanna up to hill towns and mountains that still remain areas of guerrilla resistance. Punctuated by heavily manned military hill posts, the swinging road offers a commentary on post-integration geopolitics as we pass derelict houses of the Portuguese era and the blue and white crosses of a cemetery without a village. I am told the village was destroyed by the military.

People on the bus point to the mountains and quietly tell me stories of guerrilla heroism. They urge me to "give know" in the West of the continuing war against occupation.

Integration Street leads to the Lego-land of a transmigration settlement: part of a project to re-settle — often forcibly — Javanese and Balinese from over-populated areas to the "outer islands". According to locals, the numbers of settlers now make up nearly half the population. This provokes hostility among native East Timorese, who fear cultural genocide. At the same time, many settlers are scared and confused by the opposition to the Indonesian government. A young Javanese settler tells me, "We build the East Timorese up and they complain . . . they should all be killed off".

In the hill town, *Merah-putih* flies high over the Government enclosures. The pervasive military presence heightens animosity — armed local guards patrol the market and trucks carrying armed troops circle a local football tournament.

Covert intelligence operations destroy trust in the community as local informers receive large payoffs. People don't talk to me for long for fear of interrogation and beatings. In this culture of intimidation, war stories run wild; I am told to "give know" of a range of atrocities like killings by agents masquerading as guerrillas, and attempts to undermine the power of the Church by ambushing rebels who were expecting negotiations arranged by religious leaders.

At nightfall the streets empty. An unofficial curfew descends as locals fear clandestine killings and random arrests.

Images of Che Guevara can be seen on passing buses. The local wideboy's streetwear includes commando berets and camouflage trousers, a surprisingly overt fashion statement. Informed by the World Service and raised under the wing of the Indonesian state, a highly-politicised new generation talks of self-determination and free expression. Many still look to the mountains and talk of the romanticised flight to continue the guerrilla cause. Others look beyond to change within the system or to the relative freedom in Java to organise demonstrations and campaigning for international pressure.

Many locals voice their sense of abandonment by Western governments which place trade over human rights when dealing with the Indonesian regime.

Nevertheless, as a priest from a mission for children orphaned by the conflict tells me, "East Timor is destined to change." He adds: "The people just aren't praying enough."

Twenty-one years down Integration Street, where else can change come from?

City told to act its age

Stephen Bates

TO THE 3 million tourists who wander the cobbled streets of Bruges in Belgium each year and marvel at its ancient buildings, the Flemish city is one of the most miraculously preserved jewels of medieval Europe.

It has survived centuries of economic decline, wars and occupations, but it is about to confront potentially the most lethal threat to its prosperity: the truth.

A new history of the city, sanctioned by its burgomaster, admits that, architecturally, Bruges is almost entirely a fake and depends for its charm largely on the British.

The city really is ancient and truly is beautiful, it is just that its buildings are not really as old as they seem.

The book, Bruges, The City Behind The History, by Belgian historian Roel Jacobs, concedes that there are only two medieval housefronts in the whole city and that the area closest to the original character of the place — the harbour north of the centre — is not on the tourist trail.

"Millions of tourists come to see the most picturesque city north of Venice and think they are visiting a medieval town, but the great majority of buildings are from the 19th century," Mr Jacobs says.

"It may not matter to most people because they only stay a few hours and don't want complicated historical details. But more serious people deserve a better explanation. If people deal with history untruthfully it's not so good."

The new book points out that some of the city's most celebrated sights were built within living memory. The Rozenhoedkaal, a stretch of canal overlooked by pinnacled Flemish buildings and the wooden façade of what is known as the Burgundian Court — featured on thousands of souvenir biscuit boxes — dates all the way back to 1932.

The buildings were originally denied planning permission because they were not in keeping with the Bruges style.

All but one of the city's statues date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Even the Market Hall, with its towering belfry, turns out to have been a 19th century pastiche.

The book says it was English expatriates who settled in Bruges in the mid-19th century, bringing their fondness for tea, cakes and planning regulations with them, who were chiefly responsible for preserving its character in the face of official Belgian indifference.

The Rozenhoedkaal canal of the Market Hall and belfry, a pastiche from the last century PHOTOGRAPH: RAY ROBERTS

A Country Diary

Nigel Tappin

MUSKOKA, ONTARIO: The fluttering of grey wings through screening leaves drew my eye from the breakfast table. A blue heron had perched on the very top of a pine. The treetop was perhaps 15 metres above the Boyne River in the ravine and roughly on a level with our home on the lip of the slope above. The bird was on the far side of the water, but there was a good view. A sinuous, S-shaped neck, a long, pointed fishing spear of a beak and a metre-long body clad in grey-blue plumage made a striking display.

Shifting periodically in the slanting morning light, the heron occasionally spread its large wings for stability while pivoting. It surveyed the water and marshy ground below, watching for those frogs, fish or small mammals unfortunate enough to venture into its field of vision. At times it seemed to snatch at an invisible prey — passing insects, doomed to end their lives as hors-d'oeuvres.

The scene lasted for a good 20 minutes. But eventually, the heron unfurled its impressive wings and glided from sight. The swampy ground around the bend, where the stream spreads out and flows into Lake of Bays, may have afforded a more satisfying buffet.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT'S the difference between a herb and a spice?

NOT a lot. Plants have been used for medicinal and culinary purposes since ancient times. Any part of the plant used for either purpose is referred to as a herb. All grand houses would have had their own herb(aceous) gardens growing plants suitable for temperate climates. Spices, on the other hand, refer mainly to pungent aromatic parts of those plants that are native to tropical Asia and what became known as the Spice Islands. They are used mainly for culinary purposes. — *Leslie Kennedy, Lenham, Kent*

HERBS have blue tops, spices have brown tops. (Source: J Sainsbury plc.) — *Joseph Clinton, Norwich*

WHICH is worse for the environment — the destruction of the Brazilian rainforest or the American use of resources?

THE two are linked. Environmental destruction is a symptom; the demand for ever-increasing consumption is the cause. But America (with 6 per cent of the world's population consuming 30 per cent of its resources) isn't the only nation that over-consumes.

A fifth of the Earth's people take more than four-fifths of its resources, control over 80 per cent of its wealth and produce the majority of its toxic waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Global rainforest loss is a real crisis, but blaming the poor is tantamount to environmental racism — unless we in the wealthy élite reconsider our lifestyles and reduce our consumption to a just and sustainable level. — *Paul Fitzgerald, Enough anti-consumerism campaign, Manchester*

I CAN'T remember having a "square meal". Can someone explain this expression?

MEALS have been square since airline catering has been around. — *Michael Kelly, St Nabor, France*

AS A child I thought that a good square meal referred to Spam; this was obviously without benefit of having tasted it. — *Pol Sigerson, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

HOW do I get rid of the pigeons that infest the balcony of my flat?

REGULARLY adorn your neighbour's balcony with corn or bread. While it may annoy your neighbours, pigeons will assume it is a regular feeding place and stop on your balcony. — *Gra[...] Parker, Sheffield*

A LOCAL company, Envirow[...] uses two methods: a [...] placed so as to make it impossible for birds to land; and ferocious-looking four-inch upright spikes. So far the spikes have worked perfectly well for us. — *Nick Warsi[...] Brighton, Sussex*

I LIVED in a flat with a quadrangle at the back which was a favourite haunt for pigeons. Things improved when the landlords suspended the silhouette of a falcon in the yard. A recording of the distress call of this bird of prey has the same effect. — *Peter Ward, Bath, Avon*

Any answers?

WHY does "autumn" have a separate American name, while the other three seasons don't? — *Teddy Kempster, Medford, Oregon, USA*

COULD someone please explain the meaning of the term "Private", in the military sense? In three and a half years at this rank during the last war, I never had one moment of privacy. — *P Barnett, Ilford, Essex*

GUINEA FOWL, guinea pig, Guinea Bissau, Papua New Guinea and guinea, the unit of currency . . . What is the origin of guinea and what does it signify? — *Kathryn Larcombe, Maputo, Mozambique*

WHAT is the origin of the rhythm, "Rum Tiddley-um tum. Pom! Pom!"? — *Peter Thompsett, Noosa, Queensland, Australia*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

This week Japan is saluting the Briton who gave the world a range of gadgets from the microwave oven to the pollution sniffer. But his most brilliant contribution has been the Gaia theory. **Fred Pearce** reports

Visionary inventor

NEXT STOP the Nobel Prize? Jim Lovelock, independent British inventor and Gaia guru, added to his trophy cabinet this week when he went to Japan to claim the Blue Planet Prize and a cheque for a cool 50 million yen. That is more than $400,000, double what he picked up last year from the Volvo Prize in Sweden. Nice work. Especially for a man who hasn't had a proper science job for more than 30 years, and prefers to work from a lab bench at home in Cornwall. But the big prize mysteriously continues to elude him. It is time the Nobel committee cast off its inhibitions and embraced the British boffin to end them all.

Consider his CV. For starters, Lovelock invented the electron capture detector (pictured below between his fingers). You may never have heard of it, but you know well the world it made. This subtle and immensely sensitive pollution sniffer, the size of a matchbox, allowed environmental scientists for the first time to spot tiny amounts of dangerous toxins. Parts per trillion are its speciality — quite a novelty back in the late 1950s when he invented it while at the National Institute for Medical Research, the forerunner of the Medical Research Council. Forget haystacks, this is like spotting a needle in a European grain mountain.

Using his sniffer, Lovelock explored the world. He discovered the global spread of ozone-eating CFCs in the atmosphere. Others used it to track PCBs and pesticides in our food, in air and water and in living organisms worldwide. Lovelock's widget virtually launched modern environmental sciences.

Without Lovelock's detector, the 1995 Nobel prize-winners for chemistry could not have done their pioneering work warning that CFCs could eat up the ozone layer. But Lovelock didn't share in their reward. After all, you can hear the judges whisper, he was only an inventor, not a real scientist.

Lovelock still makes his living from inventing gadgets. But his greatest invention is intellectual — a brilliant, entirely original and immensely persuasive vision of the way our world works, known as Gaia. And it is for both Gaia and the electron capture detector that he is being honoured in Tokyo.

Lovelock's pollution detector, no bigger than a matchbox

Gaia is where cosmology and biology, palaeontology and computer sciences meet to address the question: why are we here? Why has life thrived on planet Earth where all around us in the cosmos there appears only barren desert? Why Earth and not Mars? How come this planet is just so damn nice?

But Lovelock seeks the answers not in the conventional scientific way, by breaking things down into little bits to see how they work. He says they don't work as little bits, but only as a grand whole — Gaia.

In the labs and senior common rooms you can hear them mutter: this isn't science, it's a New Age religion. Lovelock says the science establishment has lost the plot. They have forgotten that science is about seeing the whole, not peering down ever more powerful microscopes. In the jargon, he is holistic, while they are reductionist.

It is a long way from inventing a clever widget to devising a new theory of life. Lovelock's voyage went like this. On the strength of his electron capture detector, he was in 1961 snatched from his research sinecure in north London to work for Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. The lab was in a panic to devise light, portable instruments to send into space to find out if there was life on the planets. And they wanted Lovelock's help.

But he quickly figured that the chances of landing a spaceship somewhere and stumbling on life were small. And even if they did, Nasa's probes would probably not recognise it. "The experiments they were proposing to send to Mars were asinine," he says. Unlike his employers, Lovelock had been looking at the Earth-bound results from his detector, which were revealing immense detail about the chemistry of the atmosphere. On Earth, he had come to realise, living things were constantly absorbing and releasing gases. So much so that the atmosphere was completely different from any atmosphere possible without life. Earth's atmosphere was in a chronic chemical disequilibrium, caused by life itself.

So, he suggested, why not apply that test to Mars? In fact, he said, you didn't need to go to Mars to get your answer. Infrared telescopes on Earth could identify the make-up of its thin atmosphere. Martian "air" was stable, unreactive, inert and dominated by a single gas, carbon dioxide. Ergo, Mars was lifeless.

Of course that is not what Nasa's Mars pioneers, then as now, wanted to hear. They wanted a reason to go to the red planet, not a reason not to go. So Lovelock eventually found himself surplus to requirements. But his insight took root. And its implications were revolutionary. Old notions about life on Earth — implicit still in almost every school textbook — hold that living things evolved simply by adapting to their environment. But this was nonsense. Life fundamentally influenced its own environment. What is more, its influence seemed to be strong enough to maintain stable



James Lovelock . . . Next time the Nobel Prize? PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

conditions over hundreds of millions of years, even though the chemistry of the atmosphere was itself very unstable.

It could even apparently respond to outside events. The atmosphere's temperature, for instance, had barely changed during a period when the Sun had grown 25 per cent hotter. If that extra heat had been transferred to the planet's surface without dampening, we would all long since have fried. A lucky chance? The more Lovelock thought, the more unlikely that seemed. We don't get that lucky.

AS HE intends to tell his Japanese audience this week, there was a Eureka moment. "One afternoon in 1965 at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, when thinking about these facts, the thought came to me in a flash that such constancy required the existence of an active control system." Life on Earth is controlling its environment for its own good. Crazy? Well, how else do you explain it?

The novelist William Golding soon afterwards coined for Lovelock the name Gaia, after the Greek earth goddess. And a hypothesis was born, edging into the scientific literature through obscure journals. But making it from the scientific fringe to the top tables proved harder. For many years, journals such as Nature and Science refused Gaian papers. Even now, Gaia is the science that dare not speak its name. In the journals, it usually masquerades under the deadening title of "geophysiology".

And in the United States, the land where Lovelock had his Eureka moment, some enthusiasts are getting cold feet. "There is Mars fever again," says Lovelock. "And if you want to go to Mars to search for life, you don't want Gaians telling you the trip is pointless." Luckily the gauntlet is likely to be picked up in the Britain next year by the University of East London. Unless someone gets to them, too. Watch out for assassin Darwinists. Some evolutionary biologists, notably Richard Dawkins, still steam at the ears at any suggestion that there could be biological control systems other than the individual's "selfish genes".

Dawkins's Thatcherite claim that, in nature, there is no such thing as society, is falling away before a more Blairite communitarian idea. Biologists call ant colonies and other similar manifestations of group behaviour "superorganisms". And the ultimate superorganism is Gaia. This links up to the new world of chaos and complexity theory. This theory holds that within complex systems, order can spontaneously emerge out of chaos. That fits exactly with what Lovelock sees Gaia as being. Suddenly, Gaia doesn't seem so absurd.

Computers have been central to the development of these new ideas in mathematics and biology. They are very good at simulating the generation of order out of chaos, for instance. Lovelock did this for Gaia by inventing a simple, computerised model world, which he called Daisyworld. Daisyworld is a vast meadow populated by white daisies and black daisies, which spontaneously operate their own thermostat. If it gets hotter, the black daisies suffer because they absorb more heat. But white daisies, which reflect more heat, prosper. Result: a world dominated by white daisies that reflect so much heat back into space they cool the planet down again. By contrast, if the world cools, black daisies do well and absorb more heat. The world warms. Here, in the simplest form imaginable, is the spontaneous creation of a control system connecting life and the environment.

Boffins and Gaia freaks have extended the Daisyworld idea, with rabbits eating the daisies and foxes eating the rabbits and so on. Their PCs hum with other worlds. One science conference on Gaia spawned papers on Root World and Taiga World, Amazonia World and Smoke World, Exxon-Valdez World and even Wally World. "It is mainly numerical models on computers that demonstrate how a Gaia-type system can work," says Lovelock. "More than half the work on Gaia has been done on PCs."

OF COURSE, neither computer models nor an intellectual fashion for superorganisms and chaos theory make the Gaia theory true. But scientists are seeking and finding some of the switches that may operate Gaian control systems such as the planetary thermostat. Here are two. We know that if it gets warmer, bacteria in soils work faster and speed up the weathering of rocks. That weathering absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, as the gas reacts with silicate rocks to produce carbonates.

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas. It helps keep the planet warm. So faster weathering reduces the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and lowers temperatures again. Greenhouse sceptics love this bit. See, they say, we don't have to worry about global warming. Nonsense, says Lovelock. These processes take too long to help us in slowing down global warming.

A second thermostat switch involves phytoplankton in the oceans. Over much of the planet, the sulphurous "breath" of these marine plants is the main source of the condensation nuclei that allow clouds to form. Without the plankton, there would be many fewer clouds and the Earth's surface would be much warmer.

This entire line of research, with its most surprising discovery, was inspired by the Gaian idea and by Lovelock's conviction from his early experiments with the electron capture detector that sulphur compounds were vital ingredients of the atmosphere. Whether or not Gaia is the literal truth, it is clearly a powerful way of looking at the world. By looking resolutely at the whole, it reveals things that you couldn't get from peering at the sum of the parts.

Gaia, at the very least, is a brilliant invention. But there is that word again. Will the Nobel Prize-givers stoop to giving their prize to a visionary inventor? They should.

Cartier's pre-war clients piled on the diamonds until they could barely stand — and rarely let taste get in the way. **Veronica Horwell** joins the incredulous throng at the British Museum

Flaunt-it brigade

YOU CAN'T shimmy around the British Museum's Cartier show with the nonchalance it deserves, because most visitors shuffle in a slow conga line close to the displays.

It's half necessary — the workmanship of the firm from 1900 to 1939 is, when visible at all, miniaturised near the scale of computer chips. And it's half reverent, since rocks *en* that *masse* emanate mega-power. Almost a magical power — the introductory cases of diamonds backed by new-in-1910 lightweight platinum metallurgy really do coruscate: the verb "to sparkle" isn't mobile enough to describe the agility with which the light refracts off diadems for grand-duchesses of the Tsarist court. These aren't the most intelligent of Cartier's output, but you will never have seen diamonds in this quantity before, so get in line, enjoy the scintillation and emit your wows.

After that, you need your wits back to appreciate that the best of the firm's output is owed to its chief designer in Paris, Charles Jacqueau. His watercolours, a point of white gouache simulating the glint off each gem, connect brilliantly with other applied arts from 1910 to the second world war. He seems to have absorbed Aubrey Beardsley's ability to outline form with infrequent dots, plus a decorative repertoire including the latest geometric forms from Modernist and Deco designers. He barely alludes to the living world, as jewellery had always done: his bracelets and clips could be architectural bandings or a door handle in an apartment in some too, too terrific New York skyscraper.

Anyway, his little scraps of brown paper (and the delicate pieces resulting from them) are more covetable than many of the surrounding goodies. Cartier's wares for pre-revolutionary Russia are ersatz Fabergé, but even frumpier than the real thing.

The Egyptian craze is vile, especially where fragments of genuine antique objects — a gentle face from a tiny turquoise faïence figurine, say — are crusted in diamonds and black onyx, as though glitzy mould were growing over them.

There is something nasty about customers who could want, or a company that would supply, a vanity case — a flauntable box holding a mini-lipstick and about one puff's worth of powder for a shiny nose — assembled from chunks of a carved inscription to the gods, or made, however exquisitely, to parody a pharaonic coffin.

Captions let you know who the buyers were — a shortish social register — how they purchased items, returned them three days later, had them broken up and remade, so fashionable and so careless of the craftworkers that what once were beautiful creations are recorded now only by battered plaster casts.

SO YOU'RE quite grateful to Daisy Fellowes (chum of the previous Prince of Wales) that her "hindoo necklace" of rubies and sapphires was so absurdly delicious that only its mode of fastening was updated by her daughter. But of course Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton kept a comb in her handbag, just like the Bakelite versions from Daddy's dime stores, but in tortoiseshell surmounted by more sodding diamonds. And the cereal queen Marjorie Merriweather Post would have worn that shoulderful of carved emeralds, cresting cold and powerful as an Atlantic wave.

When you see a piece with a character that makes you whistle appreciatively like a Raymond Chandler private eye encountering a classy dame, it was always commissioned by some great gal. Those swellegant-elegant bracelets apparently made from carved fruit gums belonged to Mrs Cole Porter.

And those rock-crystal and diamond cuffs, which perfectly mirror the sophisticated-god-I'm-sophisticated woman of 1930? Gloria Swanson bought them with the invested cinema earnings of her youth, and you can see them on her wrists, 20 years after, when she gestures as the outmoded movie diva Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard. "Square-cut or pear-shaped — those rocks don't lose their shape: diamonds are a girl's best friend."

Cartier: 1900-1939 is at the British Museum, London until February 1



The Maharajah of Patiala models a diamond bib necklace and collar made by Cartier for his father

Time's winged chariot plucks Percy from the Street

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

LAST MONTH Percy Sugden was shuffled off to **Coronation Street's** (ITV) Twilight Home for the Tiresome. Percy is one of the élite few with his own appreciation society. Fred Elliott, ah said Fred Elliott, is another.

I tried to catchline this piece Percy but the computer wouldn't stand for it. Percy, it said sharply, is an invalid name. I suppose so. Who's called Percy now except the Duke of Northumberland and my cat? In one swift swoop Maud and Percy, the last people in the Street to wear hats, have disappeared into Mayfield Court, a home for old soap stars. The horror of Mayfield Court is you are never quite sure if the residents are alive or dead. They appear occasionally and then they will stop appearing . . .

Both Percy and Maud are mark II models of earlier originals. Percy is nearly Albert Tatlock. Maud is not quite Ena Sharples. There will be no mark III model. They really do not make them like that any more.

Percy has lived with Emily Bishop for nearly 10 years. They were — Jack and Vera Duckworth apart — the last stable couple in Coronation Street. It was a courteous, irritated relationship, free from the faintest taint of impropriety. They were always Mr Sugden and Mrs Bishop to each other. Indeed, it was Percy's outrageous suggestion that Emily had interfered with his pyjamas which precipitated their parting. Mrs Bishop reeled back. Which was unfortunate as he also suspected her of drinking.

In some ways they reminded you of Steptoe and Son: irritable together, inconceivable apart. Not that Percy was a dirty old man. You could see his military moustache reflected in his shining shoes. Life had effectively stopped for him in his finest hour when he was in the Catering Corps — "I've baked furry cakes under fire!"

The first words Ena Sharples ever said, as she entered the corner shop, were: "Half a dozen fancies and no eclairs." (Sometimes I wonder what is wrong with eclairs. Mostly I don't.) Something has gone out of the Street with that generation. A sharp tongue and a sweet tooth.

Coronation Street has looked very odd lately. This week the Cadbury chocolate figures at the start began to talk to each other, and if that's not weird, tell me what is? Nothing seems to make much sense. If, for instance, you see Kevin Webster as a demon lover, then I wonder if I can also interest you in Tower Bridge? Very reasonable. The buyer collects.

His finest hour was in the Catering Corps: 'I've baked furry cakes under fire!'

Currently half the Street believes they are haunted. The ghoulish culprit is Les Battersby, who is entering houses via the roof space, eating Percy's buns, drinking Ken's brandy and watching TV. Presumably EastEnders.

Believing Emily has taken to the bottle, Percy hightails it to Mayfeld Court. This is ludicrously out of character. A soap is not a lottery, it is a family. People behave predictably within their parameters. Emily has never in her life had more than one small sweet sherry and Percy is not the man to leave a landlady in distress. You could not dislodge Percy from his bounden duty with a crowbar. That is one of the most irritating things about him.

Oddly enough, as the pensioners are pensioned off, Coronation Street's new producer promises an Asian family "stretching over three generations". And last year when a Micmac Indian from Newfoundland visited the studios it turned out that he really wanted to meet Percy. The Micmacs believe Percy is the sage, the elder, the top man on the totem pole.

The old should make a point of being born Indian or, as Agatha Christie said, marry an archaeologist. As you get older, you get more interesting.

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Just for the Ludovic

CINEMA
Richard Williams

SOMETIMES we complain that a movie isn't able to make up its mind whether it wants to be a comedy or a tragedy. And once in a while we come across something like Ma Vie en Rose, the story of a seven-year-old boy who wants to be a girl, a film that knows better than to define itself in the usual terms.

Directed by Alain Berliner, a 34-year-old Belgian making his first feature, it begins like a Jacques Tati satire on life in the middle-class suburbs of Paris, the domestic scenes shot with the exaggerated brightness of a breakfast-cereal ad. But inside the perfect household of Hanna and Pierre Fabre (Michèle Laroque and Jean-Philippe Ecoffey), the behaviour of little Ludovic (Georges du Fresne), the youngest of their four children, is beginning to cause concern. For the boy has decided that he would rather be a girl — that indeed, he already is a girl, held back only by a lack of the primary characteristics of girlhood, and believing that one day he will acquire them quite naturally.

Content at first to let him grow his hair and try his big sister's make-up, Hanna and Pierre begin to fret when he turns up at a barbecue dressed like a gypsy bride, announcing his engagement to the boy next door.

"Young children search for their identities," a neighbour says, reassuringly. "I read it in Marie-Claire." But the hissing of these summer lawns takes on a more menacing tone when the other boy's father, who happens to be Pierre's boss, orchestrates the community's disapproval.

While the Fabres' life begins to unravel, the boy slips in and out of a pink and orange fantasy land ruled by a couple of Barbie-and-Ken doll figures. Berliner handles these difficult transitions with care, gradually draining the colour from the "real" world as Ludovic's parents begin to buckle under the strain of defending something they cannot comprehend.

Confronted by a series of anxious and angry adults, Georges du Fresne quietly constructs a performance of amazing subtlety. His seriousness grounds the film, allowing the grown-ups to spin off at their own tangents — in particular, the magnificent Laroque and Ecoffey — and the director to take increasing risks with the fantasy element.

Ma Vie en Rose has great surface charm, but also claims the rarer virtue of being an French film set in a non-intellectual, non-stylish setting. As a film about difference, and about the giving and withdrawing of understanding, it is a little masterpiece.

'If England were a Restoration Comedy, then I'd be Mr Doolots'

Jeremy Sams has — so far — excelled as a translator, director, librettist and lecturer. **Michael Billington** wonders if he is too talented for his own good

JACK OF All Trades. Too Clever By Half. These are the phrases that have clung to Jeremy Sams. After all, he has written music for more than 50 shows, directed plays, musicals and opera and translated everything from Molière to Mozart. In a society where everyone has to be classified like a character in a Restoration Comedy, he is seen, not unlike Jonathan Miller or Stephen Fry, as suspiciously versatile. "It's true", he says, "that I've had to fight the idea that I'm a dabbler or a dilettante. If England really is a Restoration Comedy, as you suggest, then I'd be classed as Mr Doolots."

At the moment he's certainly living up to the name. Last month his spanking new translation of Lehar's The Merry Widow opened at London's Shaftesbury Theatre in Graham Vick's Royal Opera production. Then he was off to New York to direct Stockard Channing in The Deep Blue Sea. Next year he'll revive Amadeus in the West End and, later, if he can clear his diary, he hopes to sit down and do what his diverse talents have long been driving him towards: writing an original musical.

Snobs, of course, may wonder why the Royal Opera is devoting its resources to The Merry Widow, but for Sams there is no question that the work is a masterpiece in its own genre. "Graham Vick's 'concept' is to strip the work of its accretions and reveal it for what it is: the story of a couple who can't get it together because of their pride, their stubbornness, their lack of commitment. Graham's a stern taskmaster and faxes have been winging back and forth daily with suggested re-writes. For instance, for the famous Merry Widow waltz I came up with a last line I was quite pleased with that ran, 'Can't you hear the music sing the same old song? I love you and yes you knew it all along'. But Graham pointed out, embarrassingly, that the whole plot depends on Danilo not being able to declare his love till the very end. So it now goes 'Let the magic linger, let the darkness fall, We can choose to let the music say it all'. It's more oblique but I still manage to keep my internal rhyme so I'm perfectly happy."

Sams describes translating opera as a complex jigsaw-puzzle: "You have to write something that, if the composer had received that English text, would have led him to come up with that music." But he talks passionately about the business of theatrical translation, banishing the idea that it's a purely technical process. In fact, it's a demanding profession riven by furious internal schisms.

"I recently went to a conference of 250 translators from all over the world," he says. "I'm not sure what the collective noun is: a polyglot perhaps. A lot of people argued it was morally and ethically wrong to do versions of plays if you don't speak the original language. I dispute that. I'd rather hear Tom Stoppard's version of a language he doesn't speak than Professor Somebody's who understands every nuance. I had to address the conference and made myself extremely unpopular by saying 'Work on your English'. I would argue, in fact, that a literal, line-by-line translation is an inaccurate translation: what you have to try and do is recreate the impact of the original in a different context, to translate the audience as well as the text.

"A year ago I translated a wonderful French play by Eric Emmanuel Schmitt, Le Visiteur, which is about God going to see Freud in 1938 Vienna: God is depressed about the state of the world but the trouble is Freud doesn't believe in him. I've now been asked to re-translate it for Broadway. The point is that a French audience will stand for a certain amount of tirade and debate while a Broadway audience requires rat-a-tat rallies rather than a baseline game. Every translation must have in mind precisely who the audience is."



Sams . . . 'Theatre is a bring-and-buy sale' PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Sams also, like a theatrical Joan of Arc, hears voices when translating. "With The Merry Widow I had the advantage of knowing I was writing for Felicity Lott and Thomas Allen: I've used the fact that she can deliver a potentially filthy line with a butter-wouldn't-melt-in-the-mouth look while Tom can find a lubricious meaning in the most innocent phrase. So translation is always defined by circumstance."

Though he talks with the experience of a hard-nosed theatre nut, Sams is, by his own admission, a bit of a Jeremy-come-lately to greasepaint. His father, Eric Sams, is a Shakespeare and *lieder* scholar who taught both him and his brother French and German, the piano and keyboard harmony at an early age. But at Cambridge Jeremy scarcely went near a theatre and, on graduating, he became a *lieder* accompanist. It wasn't until Steven Pimlott asked him to write music for Ring Round The Moon at the Royal Exchange in the early eighties that he found his vocation. "Theatre", he says, "is, bizarrely, a place where, whatever your gifts are, they can be used. It's a real bring-and-buy sale. The fact that I can speak languages and write tunes is very handy, but it wasn't until I started working in theatre that things began to make sense."

Sams's whole life — not unlike Stephen Fry's — has been heavily shaped by a highly talented father: "The best I could do by way of adolescent rebellion", he says apologetically, "was to like composers he didn't." And if there is another dominant father-figure in Sams's life it is clearly Stephen Sondheim: Sams has worked as an MD on his shows, directed Passion in the West End and shares the composer's love of complex word games. But how is he going to escape his influence when he writes his own musical?

"It's difficult. In this field he has taken the ball and run so far with it . . . In an earlier age there was Rodgers and Hart and then Hammerstein, Porter and Berlin, and now Stephen has become the dominant figure. His style is wide-ranging. His choice of theme is enormous. But obviously he is a big roadblock as well as a great innovator: he's thrown a *cordon sanitaire* round the whole genre and I honestly don't know what the answer is."

One solution would be for someone to lock Jeremy Sams in a room with a pile of manuscript paper and tell him to get on with it. He is highly intelligent, musically sophisticated and claims to be "temperamentally drawn to sadness and pain". In short, at 40 he has exactly the right qualities to rescue the British musical from the ersatz-American doldrums in which it currently languishes. All he needs to do is take the phone off the hook and, for a while at least, show Mr Doolots the door.

Wild boy comes of age

DANCE
Judith Mackrel

STEPHEN PETRONIO'S work has always represented the definitive New York dance experience. His dancers weave around the stage with a recklessnes akin to rollerbladers on 5th Avenue. They fly into each other's embrace then plunge into the crowd. They are tough, buoyant, avid, and they fight to make themselves known above the thud of their accompanying music.

But Petronio is also one of London's own. He first appeared at the Dance Umbrella festival in 1983, and he's been visiting with his own company since 1986. We've watched his work in all its phases — from pink-corseted erotics and ghoulish Cindy Sherman visuals to the notorious foreplay in his duet with lover Michael Clark. Now, at 41, Petronio says he's shed his wild-boy image.

In fact, ReBourne isn't as drastically new as its title suggests. The first section, set to music by the Beastie Boys, uses a familiar vocabulary of slicing legs, skewed lines and ferocious stop-start dynamics. Yet this would once have been executed in slash-and-burn style, the dancers scything through space and scorching across the stage so fast that few images could linger and grow in their path. Now Petronio lets us briefly hold the movement in our gaze. Even though the dancers in their electric blues, oranges and greens move at speed, pauses are built into the choreography that show how dance phrases are layered to create bright, glancing texture of movement, how the choreography leaps from one dancer to the next.

The effect is to make the structure more visible, but it doesn't make the dance any less physical. Petronio's choreography has always rammed into the music's beat with thrilling force; now his style is juicier. Increasingly the dance is slowed down so that its images settle into our brains and, right at the end, Petronio, slung from a harness in one corner, starts to fall very slowly forward. This isn't, however, a man falling on his face, but one who's letting himself sink deep into his own movement.

ReBourne, with its clean-cut flights of dance, is the best of the programme.

In Lareigne, set to music by the Stranglers and David Linton, the dancers in corsets and floating white muslin look fleetingly like 18th-century rakes and poets. The piece is way too long — Petronio is much better at setting small structures in motion than deciding the overall architecture of his works — but the middle section is an unexpected wonder. Here the dancers are like scraps of pure energy, merging and flying apart on laws of motion too complex to glimpse. It's as if the movement is unravelling via some chemical reaction, or as if some small secret gesture made by one dancer is generating an explosion of pattern among the rest. It is, mesmerisingly, chaos theory made into dance. And it is a fine curtain-raiser to this year's Dance Umbrella.

Petronio . . . chaos theory made into dance PHOTO: ANNIE LIEBOWITZ

Only Brian Wilson knows

MUSIC
David Bennum

BRIAN WILSON played musicians the way musicians play their instruments. The Beach Boys' songwriter based his technique on Phil Spector's, meticulously arranging sounds and voices, stretching the borders of his studio technology. The talents of his bandmates complemented his own genius.

You can guess all this just by listening to his masterpiece, Pet Sounds. Here, if you need it, is the proof: The Pet Sounds Sessions (Capitol). As well as four complete editions of the album — the original mono, a new, well-executed stereo mix, an entirely vocal version and another instrumental one — this four-CD set is stuffed with vocal takes, backing tracks, out-takes and studio chatter: Brian Wilson's building blocks.

It's questionable whether individual albums deserve treatment this lavish, but if any do, this must be one of them. Brian Wilson himself helped to supervise this exhumation, and while his judgment on just about everything else is questionable to say the least, you have to assume that when it comes to Pet Sounds he knows what he's on about. He even got roped in on the stereo mix, even though he produced the original in mono for the very good reason that he's deaf in his right ear (which is extraordinary enough in itself, like a world-class athlete with just the one good leg).

What's on offer is an audio documentary. If you're an amateur musicologist with an endless appetite for dissecting great records, then there's enough material to bore what few friends you may possess for months. If you just love Pet Sounds and would like some insight into how it was created, then it's fascinating, and you'll probably have the good sense to play it on your own.

A few months after Pet Sounds, Brian would be recording close-harmony tributes to vegetables and denouncing himself in the belief that his songs were somehow triggering blazes in nearby buildings. Neither he nor The Beach Boys ever really recovered. It's lucky that he lit on something as timeless and sublime as Pet Sounds while he was still lucid and focused enough to put his greatness into practice. If you want to, here's where you can hear him doing just that.

An eye on the past

Tim Radford

Royal Geographical Society Illustrated
introduced by John Hemming
Scriptum Editions 339pp £45

From The Field:
A Collection of Writings From the National Geographic
edited by Charles McCarry
National Geographic Society
458pp £19.99

THE WORLD always looks mouth-watering on a plate. The Royal Geographical Society, familiarly known as the RGS, used to have a journal called Illustrated Travels. It was edited by the old Amazon hand Henry Bates and it contained rather worried reports about the absence of Dr Livingstone, and dispatches from crazed polymaths like Arminius Vambery, the Hungarian Jew who survived a Catholic education and then passed as a dervish in Ottoman Central Asia. It was illustrated by engravings copied from jobbing artists who dropped in, looking for work. One of these was Gustave Doré.

But almost a decade before Doré began knocking off studies of the Alhambra for a piece on travels in Spain, travellers with cameras were already fixing indelible images in the mind for those at home. While Colonel Grant (who, with John Hanning Speke, found the source of the Nile) was photographing a slave market in Zanzibar, a certain Mrs G Lekegian was setting a trend further north, with studies of buffalo, camels, pyramids, palm trees and water carriers. You have the whole story on three consecutive pages. The explorers arrive, and a few years and a few hundred miles behind, the sightseers are already gawping, and changing the world as they gawp.

What this stunning assembly of 300 photographs selected from a collection assembled over 136 years illustrates most of all is the swiftness of that change. There are pictures that made history, of the conquest of Everest by Hillary and Tenzing 44 years ago — and the Asia photographs are introduced by Sir Edmund Hillary, writing now. There is a study of a Saudi boy taken 50 years ago by Wilfred Thesiger when he crossed the Empty Quarter — and the same Thesiger introduces the astonishing Middle East collection.



Huli 'wig men' from the southern highlands of Papua New Guinea, by Edward Mendell, from Royal Geographical Society Illustrated

In the studies of faces then, and faces now, there is an enduring repose. Plains Indians sit by their tepee in 1880, and two tribesmen pose for Prince Roland Bonaparte in 1884, and they have the same contemplative pride as a Northern Territory tribesman, his septum pierced by an ornamental bone, memorialised on film only six years ago.

Photographs have a way of constraining the wildest landscape, so the cunning photographer chooses something strong in the foreground — a barnacled whale breaching in the southern ocean, a man and donkey on a shaky bridge in the Chitral — to suggest the hazard, the distance, the sheer scale of it all. A huge US navy icebreaker looms enormous over the ice of McMurdo Sound in Antarctica in 1960, just as Shackleton's Endurance lurches crazily in the pack ice, 300 miles from land, in 1915: the distance between the two is less than a lifetime, but it seems like an aeon.

This dazzling book carries a series of essays to introduce each section, all by people already well known for their travel books. Paradoxically, along comes something from the US National Geographic Society with no pictures at all. The National Geographic has never been famous for its writing, or indeed its grasp of the real world: until 1977, it had never carried an article about the US South that mentioned segregation, lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, sit-ins, freedom riders or black poverty. Until 1977, it had not got around to addressing inescapable geographic realities such as Cuba under Castro, and apartheid in South Africa.

But From The Field is a rap over the knuckles for the mockers, all the same. Here is ex-President Theodore Roosevelt on safari ("We were fortunate enough not to lose a single white man on the expedition . . ."). Here is Joseph Conrad up the Congo in the heart of Africa ("a great melancholy descended on me"). Here is Amelia Earhart ("Over my warm flying clothes I wore an inflatable rubber vest").

Here are Alexander Graham Bell, Charles A Lindbergh, Jane Goodall and Diane Fossey, Paul Theroux on the Zambesi, Owen Lattimore playing snooker in Manchuria, Robert Peary at the North Pole, and even David Attenborough on a zoo quest in Guyana, chasing a three-toed sloth. Ed Hillary is here, too. ("We stagger up the final stretch. We are there. Nothing above us, a world below".) Don't be a sloth, buy both.

Epistles at dawn

Peter Conrad

The Proud Highway: The Fear and Loathing Letters, Volume I: 1955-67
by Hunter S Thompson
Edited by Douglas Brinkley
Bloomsbury 686pp £20

LONG before anyone else had heard of him — which happened in 1966 when he published Hell's Angels, his avenging satire on America's sedate, stay-at-home democracy — Hunter S Thompson was a legend in his own mind. He kept copies of his earliest, most innocuous letters, and toted them with him as he thumbed his way across the continent, sure that the bales of carbon paper constituted his ticket of admission to the American literary canon.

In the letters, he brawls and blusters his way into "the Big League". When an agent rejects his work, he threatens to "cave in your face and scatter your teeth all over Fifth Avenue". Thompson was a notorious bruiser, who began his journalistic career by stomping to death an office candy machine that had gobbled one of his coins. He demands subsidies and patronage from the elders he has vowed to outdo. In 1959, he requested a weekly cheque from William Faulkner, and in 1964 he wrote while drunk to President Johnson, nominating himself as Governor of American Samoa. Faulkner did not reply; LBJ had a secretary solemnly assure the hell-raising outlaw, that he would "be given every consideration".

A rabid, uproarious mythomaniac, Thompson confected a persona which dramatised the aggression of his revolutionary times. He combined the self-destructive will analysed by Spengler in The Decline Of The West with the adolescent existentialism of Colin Wilson's The Outsider: Wilson advertised his alienation by sleeping rough on Hampstead Heath (which in the sixties looked like a radical gesture). But the model Thompson aped most attentively was Marlon Brando as the marauding biker in The Wild One. When his disruptive gang rides into the slumbrous Californian town, someone asks Brando what he is rebelling against. "Whaddaya got?" he snarls. Researching the rampages of the Angels, Thompson bestraddled a bike and transformed himself into an archetypal hero: "Genghis Khan on an iron horse, a monster steed with a fiery anus."

To embellish his belligerent persona, he began referring to himself in the third person. He became "the Hunterfigure", riding a "Huntermobile". As if his given name were a predestining augury, he fancied himself as a hunter. He stalked Manhattan with a hunting knife, in Rio de Janeiro graduated to a pistol "like Sam Spade", and later acquired a .22 Magnum which he used for "queer-baiting" in Big Sur. After Kennedy's assassination, he advanced to a .44 Magnum, with which he intended to "croak the chief of police" in Dallas. Instead, fitting a Smith and Wesson scope to his .44, he gunned down a wild boar in Colorado. What is satire but imaginary slaughter? Thompson reviled the politicians of the seventies and eighties as a "generation of swine", and treated his journalistic commentary on them as a blood sport. He took pride in pulverising a raccoon which raided his garbage can: his shotgun, he said — inadvertently paraphrasing Swift on the effects of the lash — "does awful things to a small animal at [illegible] range". His domestic pet of choice, inevitably, was a doberman.

His articles were often accompanied by photographs he had taken; he saw an analogy between "[illegible] shooting" — visual target practice dependent on a steady trigger finger — and sharpshooting. When he armed himself to write, he did his best to turn the typewriter into an offensive weapon, and was gratified when a New York neighbour, subjected to his all-night creative [illegible]: "The man downstairs is banging the floor. It is four in the morning and I guess the typewriter jars [illegible] nerves."

Despite this percussive [illegible] and alcoholic fury, the letters reveal Thompson as an American romantic, as ingenuous in his aspirations as Gatsby. (Corresponding with friends abroad, he refused to [illegible] aerograms, because the brief limits of the formats offended him.) Fitzgerald's novel recurs throughout this volume as a goad and a g[illegible], like the illusory green light shining on the horizon by Gatsby himself. Menially employed by Time magazine, Thompson kept his style free from corruption by typing out all of The Great Gatsby. He reread the book in Portuguese while living in Brazil and remarked that if Fitzgerald had been a South American, "this [illegible] have made him an emperor".

During his time in the air force he looked out of a plane and saw "the little green light on the wing [illegible] blinking", except that it shuddered as if the wing were about to break off "and send us all hurtling to the ground". Forty years after Gatsby, Thompson chronicled an America which had fallen, forfeiting its claim to be a born-again Eden.

HIS MOST acute comment on this sacred text was provoked by JFK's assassination, which he called "the most profound act of the twentieth century". Remembering the murder of Gatsby, he commented that Lee Harvey Oswald had rewritten the end of the book. Thompson never wrote a novel to equal Gatsby, but in Hell's Angels and Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas he devised a new kind of journalism, which took fictional liberties with facts.

"I got into journalism by lying," he told a newspaper when asking for a job. "Man," he assured the New York Times when applying for another job, "if you only knew how I dig facts." But he dug them because, like Mailer or Tom Wolfe, he could fictionally flex them. He declared fiction itself to be dead because American truth was stranger than any novelist's fabulation; facts, however, as reported by Time or the network news, were only "lies added up". Hence Thompson's skittish merger of the two.

Gatsby's optimistic frontier has now irrevocably closed down. No longer yearning for augmented horizons, Thompson holes up in a fortified Colorado compound and amuses himself by feuding with the local law-makers. In 1970, he ran unsuccessfully for sheriff, campaigning on the Freak Power ticket; he may not have rectified any of the abuses that ravage the land, but, almost justifying his prophetic conceit, he remains America's unavailing conscience, snapping like a doberman.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Nietzsche in Turin: The End of the Future, by Lesley Chamberlain (Quartet, £7)

WHEN people in Britain think about Nietzsche — which doesn't happen all that often — they think of an extravagantly mustachioed proto-Nazi who went bonkers. Even those who know that this is a wretched calumny sneakily turn to the final pages of his biographies in order to gawp at his insanity. Chamberlain sorts this out once and for all by concentrating on 1888, the philosopher's last sane year, and writing in that second-guessing biographical style — trying to imagine every thought going through his head, often on the slenderest of evidence — that is guaranteed to draw in the curious and easily satisfied.

What makes her book so good is its triumphantly appropriate tone: you can believe in her version of Nietzsche. "I sometimes wonder what people thought of him in the train . . . This strange man, given to disguises, who is he? Might he not be plotting the crime of the millennium against humanity?" *Und so weiter.* This might be tendentious but it draws us in, and the consistency of tone allows us to imagine that her portrait is at least coherent. Read Hayman's biography (Phoenix, £12.99) for more facts, but read this for the atmosphere and insight. There is, though, no index, which is a shameful, cheese-paring economy.

The End of Time, by Damian Thompson (Minerva, £6.99)

"NO DINNER-PARTY conversation about the millennium is complete without a prediction that the world is about to experience mass popular convulsions 'just like last time' [ie, 999 AD]." Wow, Thompson must go to some pretty exciting dinner parties. To be fair, this is a fascinating book about end-time prophecies, from ancient Judaism to the Heaven's Gate cult. An ex-religious affairs correspondent, he is not harshly dismissive enough of some of the nutters he comes across — but then it wouldn't have been much of a book if he had been.

Apocryphal Tales, by Karel Capek, trs Norma Comrada (Catbird, £9.99)

CAPEK (pron. Chop-ek) died in 1938, his heart, so the story goes, pierced by Chamberlain's umbrella. Here are 36 very short stories, most of which take a historical moment and twist it arsy-versy; people fleeing Attila are more monstrous than the Hun; a baker complains that Christ's miracle with the loaves has ruined him. This kind of game is commonplace now; but Capek was its pioneer. Each conceit guaranteed to produce a sardonic bark or a wry smile.

The Official Tamagotchi Pet Care Guide and Record Book, by Doris Betz (Virgin, £3.99)

AS PEOPLE get too scared, selfish or miserable to have children of their own, they turn to this weird electronic equivalent. I would not recommend it. Tamagotchi hands on misery to Tamagotchi. It deepens like a coastal shelf. So get out as early as you can, and don't have any Tamagotchis yourself. Then again, cyber-poo would seem to have several advantages over the real thing.

Quiet torment of a fellow traveller

Karl Miller

Walking in the Shade: Volume II of My Autobiography (1949-62)
by Doris Lessing
HarperCollins 369pp £20

DORIS LESSING once accused her friend Edward Thompson of treating her like something that had "wandered out of the bush dazzled by bright lights". Her early days in Southern Rhodesia are chronicled in the marvellously remembered first volume of this autobiography, and she has now turned to the years 1949 to 1962. The bright lights may have proved harder to write about than the bush, but the same powerful readability prevails. Exile, escape, homecoming, survival — ancient themes make their appearance in these books, which have in them the outposts and metropolis of an empire, and the end of that empire.

She is now in a cold country, at the start of a cold war. She is a single parent, whose life and works are arranged to accommodate the rearing of a young son. Her mother follows her out of Africa, returns there, but remains on her back, where she can be located to this day ("I could have killed her there and then," thought little Doris Tayler on her African farm, the strong-willed child of a strong-willed parent).

She was soon to commit what she now thinks of as the most neurotic act of her life — joining the Communist party at a point when her misgivings on the subject had become "a steady, private torment". She was already well on the way to regarding Stalin as a thousand times worse than Hitler. Khrushchev's 20th Congress repudiation of Stalin did not go far enough for her, but she was at first able to admit this only in private.

Becoming a communist placed her in one of the false positions to which she feels she has been prone, and it gave plenty of scope for her "natural disposition" to irony. But there is no irony when she gets round to facing the now "incredible and unforgivable fact that some of the most socially concerned, hopeful, dedicated souls connived at the crimes in the communist world, by refusing to recognise them and, then, by refusing to recognise them openly". All over Europe, she writes, though less so in America, it was the kindest people who had become communists. The book tells how she became a famous leftie in a London full of famous lefties. Henry Kissinger seemed unaware, when he visited her, that "in Europe 'everyone' had been a communist or been in a communist ambience". The ironic inverted commas round "everyone" — a favourite word of hers — are absent from other such claims. "Most of the people in the arts then had been communists of some kind." She went to a Trafalgar Square rally in London with John Osborne. Lindsay Anderson was there, "disapproving of everyone as usual". "Nearly everybody I knew seemed to be there."

Doris Lessing: zeal for democracy in Africa PHOTO STEVE PYKE

There was a pleasure in taunting the police, who beat some of them up, but not the famous ones, when the cameras had quit the scene. By now, however, she was sick of demos and marches and taunts and comrades. When she refers, halfway through, to "my own side" she means what she later calls "our great country, Britain": the irony involved in that second reference can't conceal that she liked it here, and not just because of the bright lights.

Quite a lot of irony was needed when she came to recall the occasion when she shared a bed, for conversational purposes, with the critic Kenneth Tynan, and noticed that his walls were hung with whips. Those critics. There were people at the time who suspected that he was less interested in sadomasochism than in talking about it, and that the same might be said of his socialism. What she calls "his somewhat perverse musical Oh, Calcutta" was called by him "after-dinner entertainment for civilised people". Spoken like a savage Red. Critics, she thinks, were deficient in their response to her novel The Golden Notebook, written at this time and often seen as her principal achievement. Especially in mind here are the feminists who wrangled over it. But the novel has meant much both to feminists and to others, and this was predicted at the time. One reviewer said straight away that "it is the sort of book that determines the way people think about themselves".

In this sphere — criticism — as in others, she thinks that things have got worse since she was young. When the party line was finally discredited, when the god failed, she felt that "'everything' was falling apart", but these were better years, she suggests, than the "grudging, cold, cautious time" we have now. It is a time when children who don't get on with their mothers are apt, unlike herself, to remain with them.

Not everyone on the left, during the years in question, was either a heartless or a doubting Stalinist. Most of them, with no secret about it at all, were against Stalin's mass murders and show trials. It is with this sort of socialism that her affinities must always have lain, despite the card she carried for a while, and it is unlikely that these affinities have been diminished by her conversion to a Sufi style of thought. She has a fine feeling for working people, for the hardships she shared with them. Her zeal for democracy in Africa, rarely a favourite concern of "the comrades", has survived both its trials and its triumphs.

There are many moments in the book when you are conscious, not of irony, but of its opposite: of a plain-spoken directness, no doubt responsible for the tactlessness which was alleged of this "difficult" woman. It can be seen as an aspect of her energy, of the energy shared with her mother. "This happened," she announces at various points, and she is off like a force of nature, like zebras across the savanna. The wise woman she hasn't wanted to be thought can be very fast on her feet at seventy-something.

The most Doris Lessing-like pages of this volume include those in which she speaks of her writing habits and their domestic setting — her patrolling of the flat, her cups of tea, her cat naps, her cats — and in which, to great effect, a cat's eye is trained on the people in the flat.

Through a distorted lens

Natasha Walter

Life and Death
by Andrea Dworkin
Virago 252pp £6.99

ANDREA DWORKIN is one of a generation of women who revolutionised the way that we think about femininity, about sexuality, and about violence against women. So it's not surprising that now and again, in this patchy book of essays, Dworkin draws this revolution to our notice with a hint of deserved pride. In 1971, Dworkin was a battered wife. "No one knew about battery then, including me," she says. "It had no public name. There were no shelters or refuges. Police were indifferent. There was no feminist advocacy or literature or social science . . . At the time, so far as I knew, I was the only person this had ever happened to."

Her work and other women's courage in speaking out mean that now everyone knows about battery. Every year, more and more women feel able to leave abusive husbands or to take partners and acquaintances, as well as strangers, to court for rape and assault.

Dworkin's relevance doesn't just lie in the past. One of the most striking essays in this book is about a recent case, that of Nicole Brown Simpson. Dworkin draws attention to the way that Nicole's own words — her diaries; the stories she told her friends; the call she made to a battered women's shelter just five days before her death, terrified that her ex-husband was going to kill her — were excluded from O J Simpson's trial. This essay reminds us that women who are abused and who suffer violence still don't have justice; their words still aren't given real respect and their bodies still aren't given full protection.

With so much right on her side, it's maddening when Dworkin gets it wrong. I suppose you can't expect fierce, brave, radical thinkers to be rational, coherent and convincing on every occasion. But her burning anger leads her to set up a monolithic world view that warps and simplifies many issues. Above all, her demonisation of pornography as equivalent to, or even worse than, concrete rape and abuse leads her into bizarre rhetoric.

Now, you may not believe that the smiling women in pornography are really having fun. You may think that men who use a lot of pornography may have undesirable attitudes towards women. But would you make the leap into saying that the women you see in pornography are invariably suffering not just abuse, but the equivalent of genocide, and that the men who make it and use it are doing the equivalent of genocidal murder?

Dworkin does make that leap. She exaggerates the harm that women experience at the hands of pornographers, and, by doing so, she seems to shrug off the real abuse and inequality that women still suffer.

England's durable guardian

Mark Cocker

IN CHOOSING plants to symbolise themselves, the English have tended to entwine their name with the foliage of three main species — the rose, oak and willow. But a fourth, much neglected, certainly more humble and perhaps more enduring plant symbol for this nation and its countryside is the hawthorn.

The species features more regularly in English place names than any other tree or plant. At one time it would almost have been possible to travel the length of the country without leaving a hawthorn's side, certainly without losing sight of one. As late as the 1940s the country was interlaced with 830,000km of hedgerow, most of it hawthorn — enough white-flowered lanes of *Crataegus monogyna* to stretch from here to the moon and back.

Since the second world war these field borders have borne the brunt of agricultural improvement, and about half of those in eastern England have been destroyed. The plant's recent fortunes thus symbolise the fate of the wider countryside and the modern English violation of their own landscape. Yet hawthorn demonstrates equally that landscape's power to resist.

Wherever the spade has failed to grub out any hard-bitten roots, and whenever humans have turned their back even momentarily, the Mayflower springs back, its arthritic limbs clawing their way towards the light. Hawthorns sometimes manage to grow even on the most exposed cliff tops, where the winds are so strong, the soils so thin and the salt spray so corrosive that the bushes spread horizontally rather than vertically. Here in Norfolk, northerly gales come ploughing over the open expanses of arable so that many hawthorn hedges have been blasted into bitter waves of thorn cresting forever southwards.

Historically, humans have embraced this durability in the plant rather than warred against it. By the early Saxon period English hedgerows were already well established. In Germany and the Netherlands some hedge systems were probably neolithic in origin. Sometimes their protective function was a matter of strategy as well as husbandry. Hedges found by Julius Caesar in Flanders were laid by the Nervii tribe to frustrate enemy cavalry.

Hawthorns were equally valued for their defence against spiritual forces. In the Middle Ages, Europeans believed in the tree's magical powers to ward off the mischievous spirits of the pagan landscape. And the plant's gorgeous snowstorm of white blossom ensured that it was deeply embedded in pre-Christian celebrations of spring and fertility. On May Day, the Mayflower was used to deck the houses, the Maypole and the May virgins.

Its central role in these heathen rituals may explain the disapproval of the official church. Certainly Pope Gregory XIII inflicted lasting damage on hawthorn's powerful symbolism when he instituted the Gregorian calendar. Before its British adoption in 1752 the hawthorns of southern England would have first flowered about May Day itself. But the new calendar moved all dates 10 days forward and uprooted the tree from its ancient talismanic position.

In Norfolk, there remains one living expression of these ancient hawthorn rituals — an 800-year-old specimen in the village of Hethel. It was recorded as a meeting place for rebels during the reign of King John; even then it was probably a good-sized tree. In its heyday last century the boll was almost four metres in circumference and the branches spread across an area of almost 29 metres. Today it has decayed to a fraction of it former self, but it would be rash to discount such a veteran. Its loss of bulk could be a case of vegetable downsizing, a trimming of sails to enable its thorny passage through the next millennium.



ILLUSTRATION ANN HOBDAY

Chess Leonard Barden

IBM'S super-computer Deep Blue has abandoned chess in favour of the stock and bond markets, so Garry Kasparov, after a few mandatory sneers at the machine's cowardice in dodging a rematch, has settled down once more to his old routine of cerebrally wiping out fellow-humans. Six rounds into last month's Fontys Tilburg tournament, Kasparov had five wins and a draw with a performance rating of more than 3,000 Fide points.

Later, Kasparov slowed, settling for a first-place tie with his countrymen Kramnik, aged 22, and Svidler, 21. Meanwhile a surfeit of all-Russian K v K contests has provided the rationale for a $5 million world championship knock-out at Groningen in a few weeks' time, which Kasparov has contemptuously dismissed and where the ageing Anatoly Karpov still has a bye to the final.

Judit Polgar, the leading woman player, can handle all the top male GMs bar Vishy Anand, Kramnik and Kasparov. The latter's latest success against her, by a violent and perhaps risky assault at Tilburg, indicates that the great sexist, whose several wins against Polgar include a move retraction and a swindle in the dead drawn endgame of rook and knight versus rook, is starting to believe his own propaganda about women players and that anything goes. Just what he thought about computers not so long ago.

Kasparov v Polgar

1 c4 e6 A move one divergence from her favourite King's Indian. 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Nf6 7 cxd5 exd5 8 f3 Kasparov's teacher Botvinnik popularised this formation, but he preferred 8 Bd3 with Ne2 and a later e3-e4. e4 9 Ne2 Nc6 10 g4 h6 11 Bg2 Na5 12 0-0 Nb3 13 Ra2 0-0 14 Ng3 Bd7 15 Qe1 Re8 16 e4!? A radical gambit, prompted by 16 h3 Qc7 harassing the g3 knight. dxe4 17 fxe4 Nxg4 18 Bf4 Qh4 19 h3 Nf6 20 e5 Rad8?! Perhaps missing the reply menacing f7: after Nh7 21 Bxb7 or Nh5 21 Nxh5 Qxh5 22 Bxb7 [illegible] the pawn, but Black is well in [illegible] game.

21 Qf2! Nh5 22 Bxh6 R[illegible] gxh6 23 Qxf7+ and 24 Nxh5 [illegible] inous. 23 Nf5 Qxf2+ 24 [illegible] Re6 25 Be3 Bc6 26 Bf1 [illegible] 27 Be2 g6 28 Nh6+. 27 Bxe1 [illegible] 28 Be2 fxe5 29 Bxh5 exd4 [illegible] 30 Nh6+ Kg7 31 Rf7+ Kh8 32 [illegible] wins. 30 Bg5 Rd7 31 Rae2 [illegible] 32 Nxd4 Resigns. For Nxd4 [illegible] exd4 Rxd4 fails to 34 Bf7+.

The US junior world cha[illegible] fell for Kasparov's charisma [illegible] one-move own goal.

Shaked v Kasparov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 [illegible] cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 [illegible] Bg7 7 Be3 c5 8 Qd2 Qa5 9 [illegible] b6 10 Bb5 Bd7 11 Be2 Bc6 [illegible] Bd3 Nd7 13 Ne2 Rd8 14 [illegible] 15 h4 h5 16 Bg5 Rfe8 17 [illegible] Bb7 18 d5 Ne5 19 Bb1 Nc4 [illegible] Qf4? Be5 21 Resigns.

No 2496

Alexander Tolush v Gosta Sto[illegible] Bucharest 1953. The two oppone[illegible] were among the hardest drinkers [illegible] chess history, but both Russia's To[illegible] lush (vodka) and Sweden's St[illegible] (schnapps) could be brilliantly cr[illegible] ative. Here Tolush (White, to pl[illegible] has the edge; how did he win?

No 2495: 1 Rexc6 and if bxc6 2 Na[illegible] or Nc3 2 d4 or Qg8 2 Qxf5. Tr[illegible] are 1 Rdd3? Nxg5 or 1 Bd3? Ne[illegible] 1 d3? Qg8.

Quick crossword no. 390

Across

1 Hurdy-gurdy (6,5)
9 Obnoxious (9)
10 Dry (of wine) (3)
11 Apple drink (5)
13 Irish girl (7)
14 Method (6)
15 Take another look at — a critical report (6)
18 Erudite (7)
20 Scottish river (5)
21 Consume (3)
22 Etching (9)
24 Growth (11)

Down

2 Donkey (3)
3 Defeat — the other side (7)
4 Craft — project (6)
5 Regal (5)
6 Asceticism (9)
7 Mercury (11)
8 Admit (11)
12 Take apart (9)
16 Cry out (7)
17 Slowly (music) (6)
19 Female relative (5)
23 Tavern (3)

Last week's solution

STICKING POINT / DEFICIT / EXACT / BUNK / PROSPERO / MAYFLY / TOMCAT / SHRAPNEL / HOLT / EVITA / CALIBRE / LANCE CORPORAL

Bridge Zia Mahmood

LAST WEEK, the World Championships began in Hammamet, Tunisia. It is the first time that the African continent has hosted the Bermuda Bowl — the Open championship — and the Venice Cup for the ladies.

Britain is not represented in the Bermuda Bowl, its Open team's effort to qualify having fallen a fraction short. But the British women's team — comprising Nicola Smith and Pat Davies, Michele Handley and Sandra Landy, Liz McGowan and Heather Dhondy — are considered among the favourites for the title, not least because they are the reigning European champions.

The British team's main rivals for the top spot are China, France, the US and Germany — the last two named teams have contested the last two Venice Cup finals and the score is one all — the US won in 1993, the Germans in 1995.

Decide how you would play this deal from the 1995 Venice Cup final. You are South in four hearts with the cards shown here (see above):

♠ A 8 5
♥ A Q 10 9 6
♦ 9 4
♣ 9 6 5

♠ K J 2
♥ K J 8 3
♦ A Q
♣ J 8 3 2

This has been the bidding:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♦(1)	3♦(2)	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Spades and another suit
(2) A game try with a heart suit

West leads the six of spades (fourth best), and East contributes the nine. When you draw trumps, you find West with a singleton and East with three small. Winning the third heart in dummy, you lead a club towards the jack. East plays the queen — and West shows out!

East cashes a second top club, then switches to a diamond in what you know to be this position, needing to lose just one more trick (see above right).

But who has the king of diamonds? If West has it, you must play the ace of diamonds, cash the ace and king of spades, and exit with a diamond to West's king. She will have to give a ruff and discard, so your club loser will disappear. But if East has the king of diamonds, you should simply take the finesse. Given the choice between an endplay and a finesse, no self-respecting expert would do the simpler thing. South went up with the ace of diamonds, she cashed two spades, she exited with a diamond, and . . . East won the king and cashed the ace of clubs. One down. Who'd be an expert?

North
♠ A 8
♥ 9 6
♦ 9 4
♣ 9

West
♠ Q 10 7
♥ None
♦ ? 10 8 7
♣ None

East
♠ None
♥ None
♦ ? 6 5
♣ A 10 7 4

South
♠ K 2
♥ 8
♦ A Q
♣ J 8

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Football Premiership: Southampton 3 Tottenham 2

Spurs spinning away from reality

Martin Thorpe

SPIN doctors are not only a political phenomenon. In football, too, a manager will often try to convince people that black is white, lose is win.

Last Saturday the increasingly under-pressure Gerry Francis made a token criticism of his team's defeat by struggling Southampton. "We've thrown away an opportunity," he said of Spurs' ability to lose the lead twice. "We need to kill off matches."

Yet he also implied, in spin-doctorish tones, that things were not all bad. "We were in control of the game, passing the ball well, we scored two great goals and they were not looking as though they were going to cause us any problems."

Well, er, not quite. Take the passing. Spurs gave the ball away with a damning regularity that was only exacerbated by their sluggish movement off the ball. Yes, the team did control large parts of the game, but with a dullness that produced little.

They did not seriously threaten the Southampton goalkeeper Paul Jones until Jose Dominguez's opening goal on 41 minutes, and did not again until their second goal on 65. Thereafter a shot off-target each from Dominguez and David Ginola was as dangerous as Tottenham's attacking intent got.

In explanation, Francis rightly argued that apart from Chris Armstrong, who is playing while half-fit, all his strikers are injured. The manager also rightly complained that Dominguez should have had a penalty when Jason Dodd brought him down.

But then Francis returned to being economical with reality. For instance, calling Southampton's equaliser "fortunate" was an over-simplification. Yes, Claus Lundekvam's half-hit shot only beat Ian Walker because of a deflection off Sol Campbell. But why was the Southampton player totally unmarked in the area in the first place?

Francis's only specific criticism of his defence was directed at Ramon Vega for his failure on Southampton's second goal to react to Kevin Davies's nod-on which allowed David Hirst to score on his home debut.

The manager did talk about the problem with Tottenham's "individual concentration situation", though even blaming personal mistakes for this defeat was another over-simplification. As Francis himself admitted: "Everyone can make a mistake, that's how goals are scored."

At both ends of the pitch, indeed. For although Spurs threw the game away through defensive errors, they would not have been in it without Southampton's.

It was the home defence that allowed Dominguez the space to pick up the ball 30 yards out, turn and wallop a shot past Jones for Tottenham's first.

Francis: under pressure

And as for Spurs' second, Francis Benali committed himself to a tackle on Dominguez, and thus allowed the little man to turn and escape on the break before feeding Ginola on the left. In a further act of generosity, the Southampton defence stood off as the Frenchman gratefully progressed to the edge of the area and unleashed a left-foot shot past Jones.

Of course football is all about opinions, and another view came from the Southampton full-back Jason Dodd. "This is one of the worst Tottenham sides I've played against," he said. "They may be skilful but they don't roll their sleeves up when the going gets tough."

With all these criticisms, and Les Ferdinand now asking for a move because Alan Sugar said he cost too much, Francis must wonder if all the aggro is worth it. Another question without an easy answer.

Cricket Third Test: Pakistan v South Africa

Pollock blitz earns South Africa series win

SOUTH African pace bowler Shaun Pollock triggered a spectacular Pakistan collapse in Faisalabad on Monday to give his side a stunning 53-run victory in the third Test — and a historic series triumph.

Pakistan needed 146 to win with all wickets remaining, but Natal bowler Pollock took four wickets in eight balls in the morning session to turn the tables.

A holiday was declared in Faisalabad in anticipation of a home triumph in the first series between the two sides in Pakistan, and there was a big crowd at the Iqbal Stadium. But Pakistan were bowled out for 92.

South Africa, who won the series after the first two Tests at Rawalpindi and Sheikhupura were drawn, also owe a debt to off-spinner Pat Symcox. Twice he excelled with the bat for South Africa and also took three wickets.

Pollock, aged 24, finished with five for 37 and seven wickets in the match, but innings of 81 and 55 on top of his wickets earned Symcox the man-of-the-match award.

"I am happy and proud to be a South African," said the overjoyed captain Hansie Cronje. "It was a closely-fought series, especially this match."

On a dismal day for Pakistan, only Moin Khan (32) and Aamir Sohail (14) reached double figures, and Pakistan captain Saeed Anwer said: "Full credit to South Africa, they deserve this win. Definitely it is disappointing not to beat them, but it was not easy to chase 145."

The tourists attacked from the first minute of the fourth day and the four Pollock wickets that fell in two overs proved fatal to Pakistan's chances. They left Pakistan reeling at 31 for five.

Pollock dismissed Saeed Anwer and Ejaz Ahmed in his third over, for nought. Ali Naqvi (6) and Inzamam-ul-Haq (5) were Pollock's other victims, falling to excellent slip catches by Brian McMillan and Daryll Cullinan.

Moin Khan and Azhar Mahmood doubled the score, despite some anxious moments, especially when Mahmood edged one ball from Lance Klusener towards Dave Richardson after making six.

With Pakistan 79 for six at lunch, their hopes rested on Moin Khan and Wasim Akram. But Akram mistimed a lofted drive off Symcox and was caught by Gary Kirsten. Symcox then removed the last two wickets in no time, finishing with three wickets for just eight runs.

The Pakistan coach, Haroon Rasheed, said: "Our batsmen played very badly while the South Africans bowled and fielded exceptionally well."

Pakistan's leg spinner Mushtaq Ahmed and Kirsten were declared men-of-the-series. — *Agencies*

Scores: South Africa 239 (Gary Kirsten 100no, Pat Symcox 81; Wasim Akram 4-42) and 214 (Symcox 55; Mushtaq Ahmed 4-57); Pakistan 308 Inzamam-ul-Haq 96; Moin Khan 80) and 92.
South Africa won by 53 runs

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Arsenal 0, Aston Villa 0; Bolton 1, Chelsea 0; Coventry 0, Everton 0; Leicester City 2, West Ham 1; Liverpool 4, Derby 0; Manchester Utd 7, Barnsley 0; Newcastle Utd 1, Blackburn 1; Sheff Wed 1, Crystal Palace 3; Southampton 3, Tottenham 2; Wimbledon 1, Leeds Utd 0.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Birminghm 0, Oxford 0; Bradford 1, Crewe 0; Huddersfld 1, Portsmth 1; Ipswich 2, Bury 0; Middlesbro 2, Port Vale 1; QPR 2, Man C 0; Stockport 1, Wolves 0; Stoke 1, Sunderlnd 2; Swindon 1, Norwich 0; Tranmere 2, Charlton 2; WBA 2, Sheff Utd 0.

Division Two: Bristol R 0, Blackpool 3; Burnley 2, Bournemth 2; Chesterfld 1, Wycombe 0; Fulham 1, Northmptn 1; Gillingham 2, Plymouth 1; Grimsby 0, Watford 1; Luton 2, Brentford 0; Millwall 1, Wigan 1; Preston 0, Wrexham 1; Southend 1, Oldham 1; Walsall 0, Bristol City 0; York 4, Carlisle 3.

Division Three: Cardiff 1, Hartlepool 1; Chester 1, Macclesfield 1; Exeter 2, Scunthorpe 3; Hull 0, Brighton 0; L Orient 0, Colchester 2; Lincoln 3, Darlington 1; Mansfield 1, Barnet 2; Notts Co 1, Cambridge Utd 0; Peterboro 2, Torquay 0; Rochdale 0, Rotherham 1; Shrewsbury 0, Scarborough 1.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Celtic 2, St Johnstn 0; Dundee U 2, Rangers 1; Kilmarnock 2, Hibernian 1; Motherwell 1, Aberdeen 2.

First Division: Falkirk 1, Dundee 1; Morton 1, Ayr 1; Partick 3, Hamilton 3; Raith 2, Stirling Albion 0; St Mirren 0, Airdrie 2.

Second Division: Brechin 2, Forfar 0; Clyde 0, Clydebank 1; East Fife 1, Inverness CT 5; Livingston 2, Stenhsmr 1; Queen Sth 2, Stranraer 1.

Third Division: Albion 0, Queens Pk 0; Alloa 0, E Stirling 2; Arbroath 1, Montrose 2; Dumbarton 1, Berwick 4; Ross Co 5, Cowdnbth 0.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Rome police criticised

ITALIAN police used excessive intimidation and force against England football supporters during last month's World Cup qualifying match in Rome, according to the Football Association.

Stewarding and ticketing arrangements for the match were also strongly criticised by an FA report into the crowd disturbances.

David Davies, the FA's spokesman, while admitting to a small rowdy minority, said most England fans acted with restraint.

David Mellor, head of the Government's football task force, said: "I am glad that the FA have grabbed with both hands the opportunity to deliver a crisp, honest report into what happened."

Meanwhile the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has announced that he is to host a summit for European police chiefs and football officials early next year to ensure that the World Cup in France is not marred by hooligans.

MANCHESTER United beat Feyenoord 2-1 in Group B of the Champions League at Old Trafford to consolidate their lead over Juventus, but did not punish last season's runners-up in the Dutch league by the margin their superiority demanded.

Alex Ferguson's team squandered a series of chances before and after Paul Scholes put them ahead just past the half-hour. A penalty from Denis Irwin 19 minutes from time seemed to put the game beyond the visitors, but a goal from Henk Vos eight minutes from time gave the home side some anxious moments.

In Group C, Newcastle United went down 1-0 to PSV Eindhoven. It was the home side's first win and the visitors' first defeat, and the result leaves the two teams level on four points, three behind leaders Dynamo Kiev.

Aston Villa produced a solid defensive performance in the first leg, second round, of the Uefa Cup to hold off Athletic Bilbao 0-0 in front of a partisan Spanish crowd. But Liverpool face an uphill struggle after being beaten 3-0 in Strasbourg, David Zitelli and Denni Conteh getting the goals for the French side.

In the second round of the Cup Winners' Cup, Chelsea were skating on thin ice and sliding towards an ignominious defeat against Tromso when Gianluca Vialli brought some colour to his team-mates' cheeks with two goals in the last five minutes. The game was stopped twice to clear snow from the pitch markings. Although Chelsea lost 3-2, the Italian star's great individual effort should ease his side's task considerably against the Norwegian side in the return leg at Stamford Bridge.

BRYAN HAMILTON was sacked as Northern Ireland's football manager, paying the penalty for his team's poor showing in their World Cup qualifying campaign. Hamilton had been in charge for three and a half years but his team's sole victory — against Albania — in the World Cup campaign reflected his overall record of only eight wins in 31 matches. Ron Atkinson, former Manchester United boss, is a leading contender to replace him.

PHIL TUFNELL, the England and Middlesex spinner, escaped with a $1,600 fine and a suspended ban until April 1999 when he appeared before an England Cricket Board disciplinary hearing, charged with failing to take a random drug test towards the end of last season. The decision means he will take his place on England's winter tour of the West Indies, which starts in January.

Elsewhere on the cricket scene, Wasim Akram, the Pakistan captain, is expected to take over at Lancashire next season after Mike Watkinson decided to stand down. Watkinson, afflicted by an arm injury, had a disappointing fourth season as captain and told the club that he did not want to be considered for the post next year. Wasim is the only obvious candidate, having been appointed vice-captain to Watkinson last year.

Meanwhile Sussex, having failed to lure Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne, have signed another Australian, Michael Bevan, who became available when Yorkshire, whom he had been contracted to rejoin after two previous successful seasons at Headingley, preferred to retain Darren Lehmann.



Tufnell: escaped ban

Brian Lara has told Warwickshire that he will definitely be joining them as their overseas player next season. The West Indian played for the English county in their Treble-winning season of 1994.

SKIPPER Paul Cayard and the crew of the Swedish boat EF Language won the first leg of the Whitbread Round the World race and with it the Volvo Trophy when they sailed into Cape Town harbour last week. They had covered the 7,350-mile stretch from Southampton in 30 days, 16hr, 54min, 26sec — more than three days faster than the record set by the Maxi-yacht UBS in 1985.

THE Florida Marlins won the 1997 World Series baseball championship with a 4-3 victory over the Cleveland Indians in Miami on Sunday. The Marlins, who have been in existence for only five seasons, became the youngest team to win a championship. Masters of the late comeback, the Florida-based team tied the game at 2-2 in the ninth and then scored the winning run in the 11th inning. It was only the third time in history that a game seven had gone to extra innings.